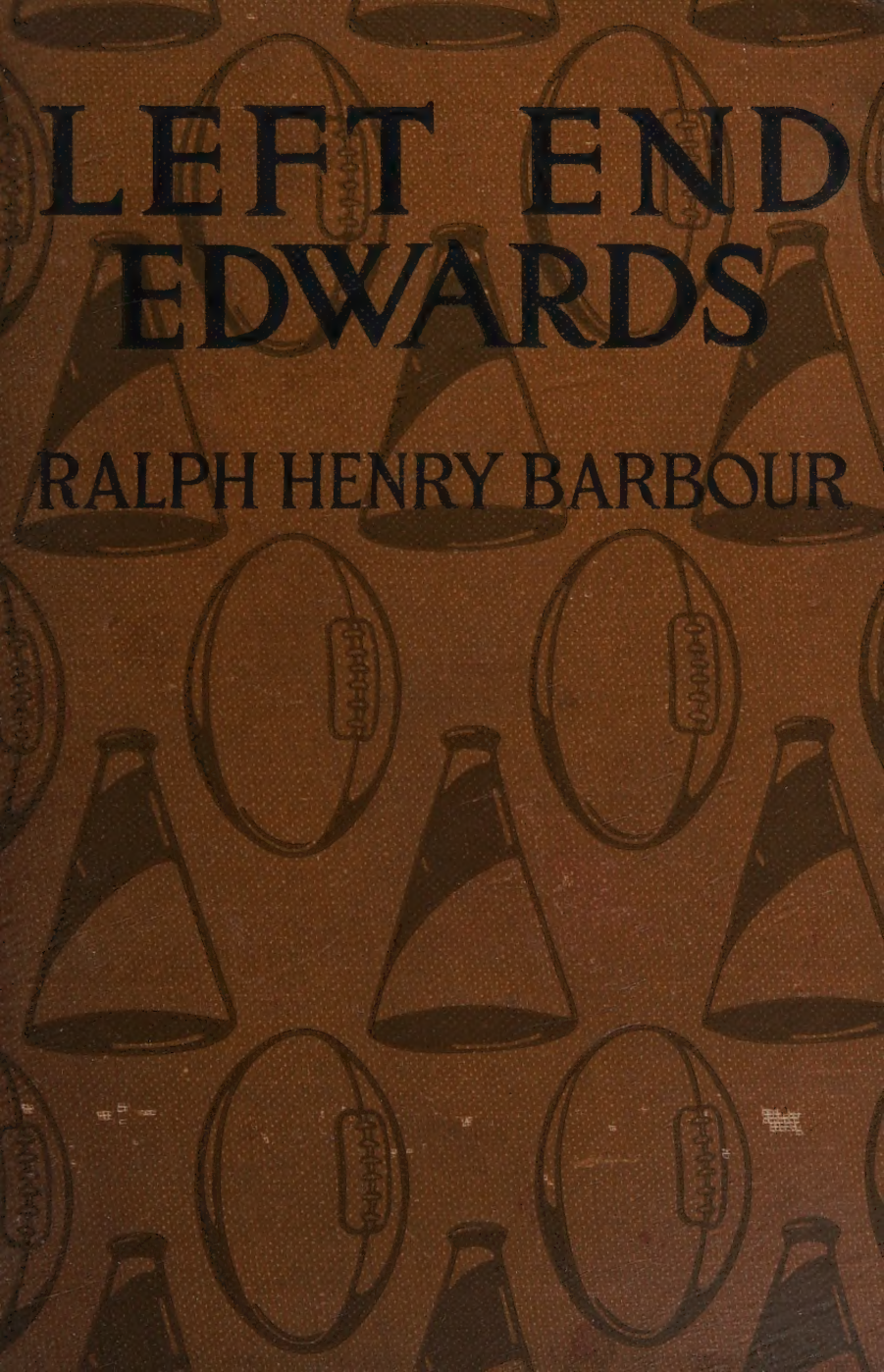
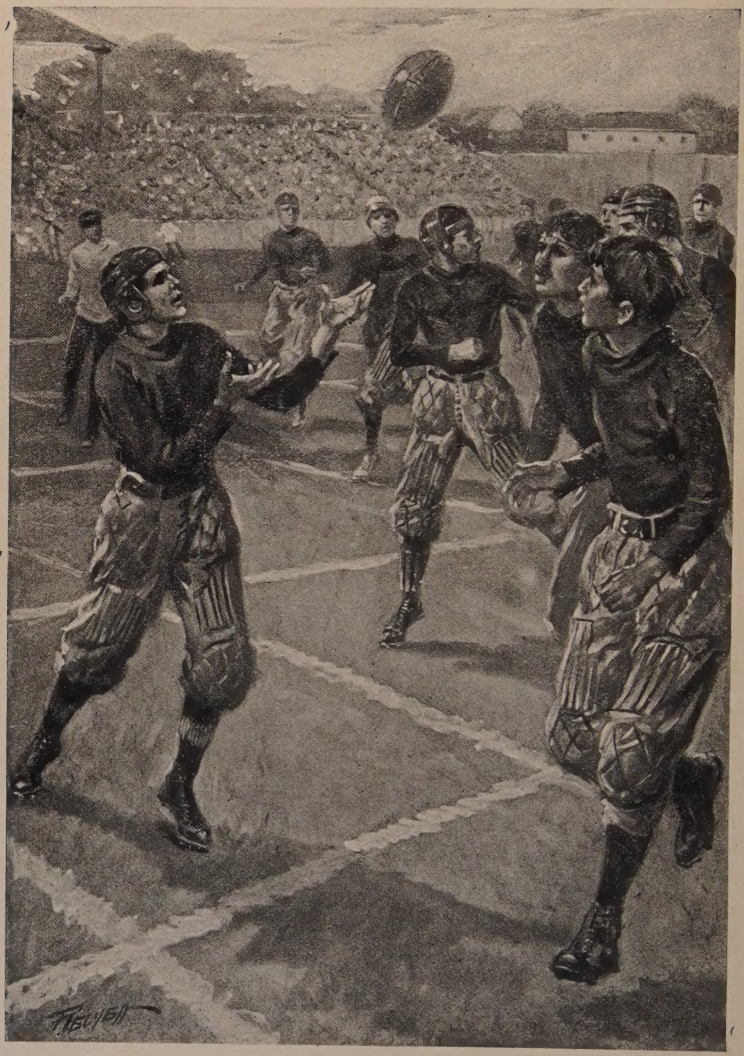
LEFT END EDWARDS

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR



Marshall T. Gustow

LEFT END EDWARDS



The "Forward Pass"

LEFT END EDWARDS

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF
THE HALF-BACK, ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
CHARLES M. RELYEA

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LEFT END EDWARDS

CHAPTER I

FATHERS AND SONS

"DAD, what does 'Mens sana in corpore sano' mean?"

Mr. Edwards slightly lowered his Sunday paper and over the top of it frowned abstractedly at the boy on the window-seat. "Eh?" he asked. "What was that?"

"'Mens sana in corpore sano,' sir."

"Oh!" Mr. Edwards blinked through his reading glasses and rustled the paper. Finally, "For a boy who has studied as much Latin as you have," he said disapprovingly, "the question is extraordinary, to say the least. I'd advise you to—hm—find your dictionary, Steve." And Mr. Edwards again retired from sight.

Steve, cross-legged on the broad seat that filled the library bay, a seat which commanded an uninterrupted view up and down the street, smiled into the open pamphlet he held.

"He doesn't know," he said to himself with a chuckle. "It's something about your mind and your body, though. Never mind." He idly flut-

tered the leaves of the pamphlet and glanced out into the street to see if any friends were in sight. But it was Sunday afternoon, and rainy, and the wide, maple-bordered street, its neat artificial stone sidewalks shimmering with moisture, was quite deserted. With a sigh Steve went back to the pamphlet. It bore the inscription on the outer cover: "Brimfield Academy," and, below, in parenthesis, "William Torrence Foundation."

"What does 'William Torrence Foundation' mean, dad?" asked the boy.

Again Mr. Edwards lowered his paper, with a sigh. "It means, as you will discover for yourself if you will take the trouble to read the catalogue, that a man named William Torrence gave the money to establish the school. Now, for goodness sake, Steve, let me read in peace for a minute!"

"Yes, sir. Thank you." Steve turned the pages, glanced again at the "View of Main Building from the Lawn" and began to read. "In 1878 William Torrence, Esq., of New York City, visited his native town of Brimfield and interested the citizens in a plan to establish a school on a large tract of land at the edge of the town which had been in the Torrence family for many generations. Two years later the school was built and,

under the title of Torrence Seminary, began a successful career which has lasted for thirty-two years. Under the principalship of Dr. Andrew Morey, the institution increased rapidly in usefulness, and in 1892 it was found necessary to add two wings to the original structure at a cost of $34,000, also the gift of the founder. Dr. Morey's connection with the school ended four years later, when the services of the present head, Mr. Joshua Fernald, A.M., were secured. The death of Mr. Torrence in 1897, after a long and honoured career, removed the school's greatest friend and benefactor, but, by the terms of his will, placed it beyond the reach of want for many years. With new buildings and improvements made possible by the generous provisions of the testament the school soon took its place amongst the foremost institutions of its kind. In 1908 the charter name was changed to Brimfield Academy—William Torrence Foundation, the course was lengthened from four years to six and the present era of well-deserved prosperity was entered on. Brimfield Academy now has accommodations for 260 boys, its faculty consists of 19 members and its buildings number 8. Situated as it is——"

Steve yawned frankly, viewed again the somnolent street and idly turned the pages. There

were several pictures, but he had seen them all many times and only the one labelled " 'Varsity Athletic Field—Gymnasium Beyond " claimed his interest for a moment. At last,

" They've got a peach of an athletic field, dad," he observed approvingly. " I can see six goals, and that means three gridirons. And there's a baseball field besides. The catalogue says that ' provision is also made for tennis, boating and swimming,' but I don't see any tennis courts in the picture."

" All right," grunted his father from behind the paper.

" I wonder," continued Steve musingly, " where you get your boating and swimming. It says that Long Island Sound is two and a half miles distant. That's a long old ways to go for a swim, isn't it? "

Mr. Edwards laid the paper across his knees and regarded the boy severely. " Steve," he said, " about the only thing I've heard from you since that catalogue arrived is the athletic field and the gymnasium. I'd like to refresh your mind on one point, my son."

" Yes, sir? " said Steve without much eagerness.

" I'd like to remind you that you are not going to Brimfield Academy to play football or baseball,

or to swim. You're going there to study and learn! I don't propose to spend four hundred and fifty dollars a year, besides a whole lot for extras, to have you taught how to kick a football or make a home-hit. And——"

"A home-run, sir," corrected Steve humbly.

"Or whatever it is, then. I expect you to buckle down when you get there and learn. Remember that you've got just two years in which to prepare yourself for college. If you aren't ready then, you don't go. That's flat, my boy, and I want you to understand it. So, if you have any idea of football and tennis as your—er—principal courses you want to get it right out of your head. Now, for a change, suppose you have a look at the studies in front of you, and don't let me hear anything more about the gymnasium or the—the what-do-you-call-it field."

"All right, sir." Steve obediently turned the pages back. "Just the same," he said to himself, "he didn't know what 'mens sana in corpore sano' meant any better than I did! Bet you *he* didn't kill himself studying when *he* went to school!" With a sigh he found the "Courses of Study" and read: "Form IV. Classical. Latin: Vergil's Aeneid, IV—XII, Cicero and Ovid at sight, Composition (5). Greek: Xenophon's Hel-

lenica, Selections, Iliad and Odyssey, Selections, Sight Reading, Reviews, Composition (5). German (optional) (4). French: Advanced Grammar and Composition, Le Siege de Paris, Le Barbier de Saville——"

At that moment a shrill whistle sounded outside the library window and Steve's eyes fled from the pamphlet to the grinning face of Tom Hall set between two of the fence pickets. The Catalogue of Brimfield Academy was tossed to the further end of the seat, and Steve, nodding vigorously through the window, jumped to his feet.

"I'm going for a walk with Tom, sir," he announced half-way to the hall door. Mr. Edwards, smothering a sigh of relief, glanced at the weather.

"Very well," he said. "Don't get your feet wet. And—er—be back before it's dark."

Steve disappeared into the dim hallway and Mr. Edwards gave honest expression to his sense of relief by elevating his feet to the seat of a neighbouring chair, dropping the newspaper and, with a luxurious sigh, composing himself for his Sunday afternoon nap. But peace was not yet his, for a minute or two later Steve came hurrying in again. Mr. Edwards opened his eyes with a frown.

"Sorry, sir," said Steve, "but Tom wants to see the catalogue."

His father nodded drowsily and Steve, securing the pamphlet, stole out again with creaking Sunday shoes. Very quietly the front door went shut and peace at last pervaded the house. In the library, Mr. Edwards, dropping into slumber, was dimly conscious of a last disturbing thought. It was that he was going to miss that boy of his a whole lot after next week!

"It's all right," declared Tom Hall as he took the catalogue from Steve with eager fingers. "At least, I'm pretty sure it is. He said at dinner that he'd think it over, and when he says that it means—that it's all right. What do you say, eh?"

"*Bully!*" That was what Seve said. And he said it not only once but several times and with varying degrees of enthusiasm and volume. And, as though fearing his chum would doubt his satisfaction, he accompanied each "*Bully!*" with an emphatic thump on Tom's back. Tom, choking and coughing, squirmed out of the way.

"Here! Ho-ho-hold on, you silly chump! You don't have to kill a fellow!"

"Won't it be dandy!" exclaimed Steve, beaming. "We can room together! And—and——"

"You bet! And we can have a bully time on the train, too. Gee, I never travelled as far as that alone!"

"I have! It's lots of fun! You eat your meals in a dining-car and there's a smoking-room where you can sit and chin as late as you want to and you get off at the stations and walk up and down the platform and you tip the negro porters and——"

"Wouldn't it be great if we both made the football team, Steve? Of course, you'll make it anyway, and I might if I had a little luck. Townsend said last year I didn't do so badly, you know, and if——"

"Of course you'll make it! We both will; next year anyway. I'll bet they've got lots of fellows on the team no better than you are, Tom. Wait till I show you the athletic field. It's a corker!" And Steve's fingers turned the pages of the school catalogue eagerly. "How's that?" he demanded at last in triumph.

They paused under a dripping tree while Tom viewed the picture, Steve looking over his shoulder.

"It's fine!" sighed Tom at last. "Gee, I hope—I hope he lets me!"

"Let's go over there now so you can show him

this," suggested Steve. But Tom shook his head wisely.

"Not now," he said. "He don't like to be disturbed Sunday afternoons. He—he sort of has a nap, you see.

"Just like dad," replied Steve. "Bet you when I get as old as that I won't stick around the house and go to sleep. Say, Tom, what does 'Mens sana in corpore sano' mean?"

"A sound mind in a sound body," replied Tom promptly. "Why?"

"It's in here and I asked dad and he didn't know." Steve chuckled. "He made believe he was peevish with me, so's he wouldn't have to fess up. Dad's foxy, all right!"

"Well, you ought to have known, Steve," said Tom severely.

"Sure," agreed Steve untroubledly. "That's what he said. Let's take that a minute. I want to show you the picture of the campus."

"Let's sit down somewhere and look it over," said Tom. "I told father that it was a school where they were terribly strict with the fellows and you had to study awfully hard all the time. I wonder if it is."

"I don't believe so," answered Steve. "They say so much about football and baseball and things

like that you can tell they aren't cranky about studying. And look at the pictures of the different teams in here. There's the baseball nine, see? Pretty husky looking bunch, aren't they? And—turn over—there you are—there's the football team. Some of those chaps aren't any bigger than I am, or you, either. Good looking uniforms, aren't they? Say, dad gave me a lecture on not thinking I was going there to just play football. Fathers are awfully funny sometimes!"

"You bet! I wonder—I wonder—would you mind if we tore out a couple of these pictures before he sees it? I'm afraid he might think there was too much in it about athletics."

"No, tear away! Here, I'll do it. We'll take the pictures of the teams out. How about the athletic field? Better tear that out too, do you think?"

"Well, maybe, just to be on the safe side, you know. Don't throw 'em away, though. We might want to look at them again. Let's go over to the library where we can talk, Steve."

CHAPTER II

OFF TO SCHOOL

Possibly you are wondering why two boys, each of whom was possessed of a perfectly good home of his own, should select the Tannersville Public Library as a place in which to converse. The answer is that Steve's father and Tom's father were in the same line of trade, wholesale lumber, and had a few years before fallen out over some business matter. Since that time the two men had been at daggers drawn during office hours and only coldly civil at other times. Steve was forbidden to set foot in Tom's house and Tom was as strictly prohibited from entering Steve's. Had the fathers had their way at the beginning of the quarrel the boys would have ceased then and there to have anything to do with each other. But they had been close friends ever since primary school days and, while they reluctantly respected the dictum as to visiting at each other's residences, they had firmly refused to give up the friendship, and their fathers had finally been forced to sanction what they could not prevent.

At the time this story opens, the quarrel between the two men, each a prominent and well-to-do member of the community, still continued, but its edge had been dulled by time. Both Mr. Edwards and Mr. Hall took active parts in municipal affairs and so were forced to meet often and to even serve together on various committees. They almost invariably took opposite sides on every question, but they did not allow their personal quarrel to interfere with their public duties.

The boys had at first found the condition of affairs very irksome, but had eventually got used to it. It was hard not to be able to run in and out of each other's houses as they had done when they had first known each other, but there were plenty of opportunities to be together away from home and they made the most of them and were well-nigh inseparable. Mr. Edwards had declared, when announcing the fact in the preceding spring, that Steve was to go to boarding school, that he was sending the boy away to remove him from the questionable association of Tom Hall. But Steve gave little credence to that statement, for he knew that secretly his father thought very well of Tom. The real reason was that Steve had not been making good progress at high school, owing principally to the fact that he gave too much time to

athletics and not enough to study. Mr. Edwards concluded that at a boarding school Steve would be under a stricter discipline and would profit by it. Steve's mother had died many years before, and his father, while perfectly able to command a large army of employees, was rather helpless when it came to exercising a proper authority over one sixteen-year-old boy!

Naturally enough, Tom, when he had learned of his chum's impending departure in the fall for boarding school, began a vigorous campaign to secure parental permission to accompany him. Mrs. Hall had soon yielded, but Mr. Hall had held out stubbornly until almost the last moment. "I guess," he had said more than once, "you see enough of that Edwards boy without going off to the same boarding school with him! If you want to go to some other school I'll consider it, Tom, but I'm blessed if I'll have you tagging after Steve Edwards the way you propose!" But in the end he, too, capitulated, though with ill-grace, and for a week there were not two busier persons in all Tannersville than Steve and Tom. Steve had taken time by the forelock and had accumulated most of the necessary outfit, but Tom had to attend to all his wants in six weekdays, and there was much scurrying around the shops by the two

lads, much hurry and worry and bustle in the Hall mansion. You had to take with you such a lot of silly truck, you see! Or, at least, that is the way Tom put it. The catalogue informed them that they must provide their own sheets, pillow-cases, spreads, towels, napkins and laundry bags, as well as take with them a knife, fork and spoon each. Steve sarcastically wondered if the school gave them beds to sleep in! The situation was further complicated by the eleventh-hour discovery on the part of Mrs. Hall that Tom's clothing, while quite good enough for Tannersville, would never do for Brimfield Academy, and poor Tom had to be fitted to new suits of clothes and shoes and hats and various other articles of apparel.

They were to leave early Monday morning, for in that way they could reach Brimfield before dark. Both boys, who had set their hearts on a night in a sleeping-car, with all its exciting possibilities, begged to be allowed to make their start Monday evening, which would allow them to arrive at school Tuesday forenoon in plenty of time. But neither Steve's father nor Tom's would listen to the suggestion.

"Then I'll get there a whole day before school opens," grumbled Tom, "and have to stay there all alone Monday night."

"It won't hurt you a bit," replied Mr. Hall. "And the catalogue says that students will be received any time after Monday noon. I'm not going to have you two reckless youngsters travelling around the country together at night."

Tom, recognising the inevitable, said no more.

There was a somewhat awkward ten minutes at the station, for both Mr. Edwards and Mr. Hall, the latter accompanied by his wife, went down to see the boys off. The men nodded coldly to each other and then the odd situation of two boys who were to travel together side by side taking leave of their parents at opposite ends of the same car developed. Tannersville is not a large town and those who were on the platform that morning when the New York express pulled in understood the dilemma and smiled over it. Steve and Tom were both rather relieved when the good-byes were over and the train was pulling out of the station.

"Blamed foolishness," muttered Steve as he met Tom where their bags were piled on one of the seats.

"Yes, don't they make you tired?" agreed the other. "Say, how much did you get?"

Steve thrust his fingers into a waistcoat pocket

and drew out a carefully folded and very crisp ten-dollar bill, and Tom whistled.

"I only got seven," he said; "five from father and two from mother. I guess that will do, though. The only things we have to pay for are dinner and getting across New York. Got your ticket safe?"

Ensued then a breathless, panicky minute while Steve searched pocket after pocket for the envelope which contained his transportation to Brimfield, New York. The perspiration began to stand out on his forehead, his eyes grew large and round and his gaze set, Tom fidgetted mightily and persons in nearby seats, sensing the tragedy, grinned in heartless amusement. Then, at last, the precious envelope came to light from the depths of the very first pocket in which he had searched and, with sighs of vast relief, the two boys subsided into the seat. By that time Tannersville was left behind and the great adventure had begun!

There are lots of worse things in life than starting off to school for the first time when you have someone with you to share your pleasant anticipations and direful forebodings. It is an exciting experience, I can tell you! The feeling of being cast on your own resources is at once blissfully

uplifting and breathtakingly fearsome. Suppose they lost their way in New York? Suppose they were robbed of their tickets or their pocket money? You were always hearing about folks being robbed on trains, while, as for New York, why, every fellow knew that it was simply a den of iniquity! Or suppose the train was wrecked? It was Tom who supplied most of these direful contingencies and Steve who carelessly—or so it seemed—disposed of them.

"If we lost our way we'd ask a policeman," he said. "And if anyone pinched our money or our tickets we'd just telegraph home to the folks and wait until we heard from them."

"Where'd we wait?" asked Tom with great interest.

"Hotel."

"They wouldn't let us in unless we had money, would they?" Tom objected. "Maybe we could find the United States consul."

"That's only when you're abroad," corrected Steve scathingly. "There aren't any United States consuls in the United States, you silly chump!"

"I should think there ought to be," Tom replied uneasily. "What time do we get to New York?"

"Two thirty-five, if we're on time. We ought to be. This is a peach of a train; one of the best on the road. Bet you she's making a mile a minute right now."

"Bet you she isn't!"

"Bet you she is! I'll ask the conductor."

That gentleman was approaching, and as they yielded their tickets to be punched Steve put the question. The conductor leaned down and took a glance at the flying landscape. "About forty-five miles an hour, I guess. That fast enough for you, boys?"

"Sure," replied Tom. "But he said we were going a mile a minute."

"No, we don't make better than fifty anywhere. You in a hurry, are you?"

"Only for dinner," laughed Steve. "Where do we get dinner, sir?"

"There's a dining-car on now," was the reply. "Or you can get out at Phillipsburg at twelve-twenty-three and get something at the lunch counter. We stop there five minutes."

"Me for the dining-car," declared Steve when the conductor had moved on. "What time is it now, I wonder."

It was only a very few minutes after eight, the discovery of which fact occasioned both surprise

and dismay. "Seems as though it ought to be pretty nearly noon, doesn't it?" asked Tom.

"Yes. What time did you have breakfast? I had mine at half-past six."

"Me too. Let's go through the train and see if we can find some apples or popcorn or something."

The trainboy was discovered in a corner of the smoking-car and they purchased apples, chocolate caramels and salted peanuts, as well as two humorous weeklies, and found a seat in the car and settled down to business. They were both frightfully hungry, since excitement had prevented full justice to breakfasts. It was horribly smoky in that car, but Steve declared that he liked it, and Tom, although his eyes were soon smarting painfully, pretended that he did too.

"I suppose we'll have to smoke at school," said Tom without enthusiasm.

Steve considered the question a moment. "I don't believe we will unless we want to," he replied at last. "We can say it's because we're in training, you know. They don't allow you to smoke when you're trying for the football team or anything like that."

Tom sighed his relief. "It makes me horribly squirmy," he said. "I thought, though, that if

all the fellows did it, you know, I'd better, too. In all the stories about boarding schools I've ever read, the fellows smoke on the sly and get found out. Don't see much fun in that, though, do you?"

"No." Steve devoured the last of his apple and started on the peanuts. "I don't believe those stories very well, anyway. There's always a goody-goody hero that gets suspected of something he didn't do and knows who really did it all the time and won't tell. And then he saves another fellow from drowning or something and it turns out that it was that fellow who did it, you know, and he goes and fesses up to the principal and the principal asks the hero's pardon in class and the captain of the football team comes to him and begs him to play quarterback or something, which he does, and the school wins its big game because the hero gets the ball and runs the length of the field with it and scores a touchdown. I guess boarding school isn't really very much like that, Tom. I guess there's a heap more hard work to it than those fellows who write the stories tell you about. Anyway, we'll soon find out."

"Still, I guess some of those things do happen sometimes," said Tom a trifle wistfully, unwilling to relinquish the story-book romance. "Fel-

lows do get wrongly accused of—of things, and they do rescue other fellows from drowning—sometimes, and fellows do win football games. I'd like to do that and be a hero!"

"Sure! So would I. Bet you, though, there won't be any of that kind of stuff at Brimfield. I dare say we'll wish ourselves out of it long before Christmas! If anyone wrongly accuses me of anything you can bet I'll make a kick. You won't see me getting punished for what some other fellow's done. That's all right in stories, but not for yours truly! Not a bit of it, Tom!"

CHAPTER III

STOP THIEF!

THEY descended on the dining-car at twelve o'clock promptly, being unable to remain away any longer, and gave an excellent imitation of a visitation of locusts performing their well-known devastating act. If any two travellers by land or sea ever received their money's worth in food it was Steve and Tom. They took the menu card and briskly demanded everything in order, and when, having finished their dessert, they made the discovery that a criminally careless waiter had deprived them of pineapple sherbert, they immediately and indignantly saw to it that the omission was corrected. Afterwards, groaning with happiness and repletion, they dragged themselves back to their own car and subsided on the seat in beatific silence.

An hour later they came out of their stupor to stare eagerly, excitedly out at the indications of the approaching metropolis. Meadows strung with enormous and glaring signboards gave place to towns and presently there came a pause at a

station where other trains whisked in and out with amazing frequency. Then on again, and they were suddenly dipping into a tunnel, conscious of an unpleasant pressure against their eardrums. Tom's expression of bewildered alarm moved a kind-hearted neighbour across the car aisle to lean over and explain smilingly that the train was now running under the river, a piece of information but little calculated to remove Tom's fears had he given the slightest credence to it, which he didn't.

"I guess," he muttered resentfully close to Steve's ear, "he thinks we're a couple of 'greenies' for fair! Going under a river!"

And then, almost before Tom's indignation had given way again to alarm, the tunnel was left behind and they were in New York at last, a dimly-lighted, subterranean New York filled with hurrying crowds, bustle, noise, confusion and importunate porters. Even though the two boys emerged to the platform in a somewhat dazed condition, they had no intention of wasting perfectly good pocket money having their bags carried for them, and so started out to find the office of the baggage transfer company quite bravely. For a minute they had only to follow the hurrying throng of fellow-passengers, but soon this throng divided and went separate ways and Steve and Tom, rest-

ing their arms by depositing their hand luggage on the lower step of an apparently interminable flight of broad stairs, looked about for someone to question. But everyone seemed in a terrible hurry, and when, at last, Steve ventured to put a query to a benevolent-looking elderly gentleman who clutched a tightly-rolled umbrella in one hand and an afternoon paper in the other, he almost had his head bitten off! In the end, they proceeded up the stairway and at last came upon a returning porter who gave them their direction. By the time they had reached the transfer company's office they had walked so far that Tom wondered whether most of the city was not contained inside the station!

Presently, though, he saw that it wasn't. For they found themselves standing outside the terminal on a street that stretched, apparently, for millions of miles in each direction! They had received detailed advice from the man in the transfer company's office as to the best method of reaching the Grand Central Station, and the directions had sounded quite easy to follow. But now the feat didn't look so simple, for the man had told them to take a car going in a certain direction and there wasn't a car in sight! Moreover, when Tom came to look for car-tracks there weren't any!

He pointed out the fact to Steve, and Steve, at first a bit dismayed, at last shrugged his shoulders and observed his chum pityingly.

"You don't suppose all the cars in this town run on tracks, do you?" he asked.

"What do they run on then?"

"Why—er—you wait and see!"

"That's all right, but it's almost three o'clock and our train goes from the other station at a quarter-past, and——"

"Well, we'll ask someone," said Steve. But, oddly enough, there was no one to ask. For a town as large as New York that block of street was strangely deserted. A team or two passed and an elderly woman crept by on the opposite sidewalk, but no one came near them. Finally Steve muttered:

"Looks to me as if we were on the wrong street. Maybe there are two doors to this old station, Tom."

"Of course there are! Let's walk down to that corner. There goes a car now!" And Tom, as though his future happiness depended on catching that particular car, seized his bag and started down the street at a run. Steve followed more leisurely, and when he reached the corner Tom was talking to a policeman. It was all very sim-

ple. They had made the mistake of leaving the terminal by a wrong exit and had emerged on to a cross-town street. After that it was easy. A car lumbered up, the policeman stopped it for them, they climbed aboard, were hurled half the length of the aisle and fell into seats. A few minutes later they transferred to a cross-town line without misadventure.

"They certainly make you step lively in this town," panted Tom, clutching a strap and narrowly avoiding a seat in the lap of a very stout lady. "Glad I don't have to live here!"

Steve, however, whose eyes were darting hither and thither in a desperate effort to lose none of the sights, was more favourably disposed toward the city. Even when, owing to a blockade at one of the street intersections, it became evident that they could not possibly make the three-fifteen train to Brimfield, Steve refused to be troubled. "Maybe," he said, "we'll have time to walk around a bit and see something. Say we do it, anyway, Tom?"

"No, sir, this place is too blamed big! First thing we'd know we'd be lost for fair and never would get to Brimfield. When I get to that station I'm going to sit down and stay there!"

When they did reach it the three-fifteen train

had been gone nearly ten minutes, and inquiry at a window labelled "Information" elicited the announcement that the next train available for them would not leave until three-fifty-eight, since Brimfield, it seemed, was not a sufficiently important station to be served by all the trains.

"That gives us half an hour," said Steve eagerly. "Let's check our bags somewhere and go out and look around."

"Yes, and get lost! No, sir, not for mine!"

"Oh, don't be such a scarecrow! Come on!"

But Tom was obdurate. "You go if you want to," he said, "but I'm going to sit down right here and wait. You can leave your bag and I'll look after it. Only, if you don't get back by a quarter to four I'm going to the train, and I'll take your bag with me."

"All right. I just want to go out front awhile. I'll be back in ten minutes. You stay here. And keep your eye on the bags, Tom. I guess there's a lot of sneak-thieves around here." And Steve looked about him suspiciously, his glance finally falling on Tom's left-hand neighbour, a youth of perhaps nineteen years upon whose good-looking face rested an amused smile. Instantly, however, the paper he was holding was raised to hide his face, and Steve frowned. The fellow was, thought

Steve, altogether too well-dressed and slick-looking to be honest, and that smile disturbed him. He leaned down and whispered in Tom's ear:

"Look out for the fellow next to you! I think he's a crook!"

Tom turned an alarmed glance to his left and a disturbed one on Steve. "I—I guess," he said with elaborate carelessness, "I'll sit over there where it's lighter." Whereupon he gathered the bags up and literally fled across the waiting-room, Steve at his heels. In his new location, out of sight of the suspected youth, he said hoarsely: "I reckon he was a pickpocket, don't you?"

"You can't tell," responded Steve, shaking his head knowingly. "Anyway, you want to keep an eye on those bags every minute. I'll be right back, though. Want to see my paper?" And Steve handed an *Evening Sun,* purchased on the car, to his chum and wound his way through the throng toward the entrance.

Left to himself, Tom looked at the clock and saw that the hour was three-thirty-two, glanced apprehensively about him in search of possible malefactors, dragged the bags closer to his feet and unfolded the paper. But he couldn't find much to interest him in it. Besides, he had to look at the clock every few minutes, and whenever a man

in a uniform appeared with a megaphone and announced the impending departure of a train Tom had heart disease, seized both bags and crouched ready for instant flight until he was assured that the word " Brimfield " was not among the list of stations enunciated through the trumpet. It was after he had sunk back with a sigh of relief on finding that a train for " Pittsburgh, Chicago and the West " was not his that he discovered that an empty seat at his right had been occupied during his strained interest in the announcer. Glancing around he saw that the occupant was the well-dressed, good-looking youth who had been seated next to him before. The youth seemed very interested in the paper he was reading, his gaze being apparently fixed on a column headed " Tiger's Football Players Report," but Tom refused to be deceived. Only the fact that a grey-coated station policeman was standing within hail kept him from a second flight. Steve, he reflected nervously while he wound both feet around the bags, would return in a minute or two and then they could go to the train. Tom devoutly wished himself and the bags there now. Once he was conscious of the fact that the youth beside him was glancing his way, but he pretended not to be aware of it. Then his neighbour spoke.

"Princeton ought to have a pretty good team this year," he observed genially. Tom, his heart in his mouth, nodded.

"Y-yes," he said.

"Interested in football?" went on the other. Tom dared a quick glance at the smiling face and shook his head.

"No, thank you. I mean—yes, a little." He didn't want to talk because he had read that confidence men always engaged their victims in conversation before selling them counterfeit money or leading them to gamble away their savings. Tom's eyes darted anxiously about in search of Steve and he wondered how soon the smooth-voiced stranger would call him by name or ask after the folks in Tannersville. He hadn't long to wait!

"It's a great game," pursued the other. Then, after a short pause: "Say, I've met you before, haven't I? Your face looks familiar."

"No," answered Tom shortly, digging his feet convulsively against the bulging sides of the bags on the floor.

"My mistake, then. I thought perhaps you were from Tannersville, Pennsylvania."

Tom almost jumped, although he had been expecting some such remark. It was, he reflected

agitatedly, absolutely marvellous the way these fellows learned things! In a moment the fellow would tell him his name!

The fellow didn't, though. He only said: "Tannersville is a fine town. Ever been there?"

Tom shook his head energetically. "Never!" he fibbed.

"Oh!" The confidence-man—for Tom had fully decided that such he was—seemed disappointed. But he wasn't discouraged. "Which way are you travelling?" he asked.

Tom did a lot of thinking then in a fragment of a minute.

"Philadelphia," he blurted.

"Philadelphia! Why, say, you're in the wrong station. You ought to go to the Pennsylvania Terminal. I guess you're a stranger here, eh? Tell you what I'll do. You come with me and I'll put you on a car that'll take you right there."

"I—I've got to wait for a friend," muttered Tom desperately, sending an appealing glance toward the policeman who had now begun to saunter slowly away.

"That so? Well——" The other got up with a glance at the clock and reached down for his suit-case. Tom's gaze followed the direction of that hand closely. It was, he thought, odd that a

confidence-man should carry a suit-case, but that might be only an attempt to avert suspicion. The bag held the inscription "A. L. M., Orange, N. J." Probably the bag had been stolen. Tom fixed that inscription firmly in his mind. "I'll have to be going," said "A. L. M." "Sorry I can't be of assistance to you, kid. I thought that maybe if you were going my way, out to Brimfield, I could give you a hand with your bags."

Tom gasped! How did he know about Brimfield?

"Thanks," he muttered. "I—I'll get on all right." Standing there in front of him "A. L. M." looked very youthful to be such a deep-dyed villain and Tom felt a bit sorry for him. But the villain was smiling broadly and, as it seemed to Tom, a trifle mockingly.

"Better keep a sharp lookout for crooks," advised the other. "There are lots of 'em about here. See that old chap over there with the basket of fruit in his lap?" The stranger moderated his voice and leaned toward Tom. Tom, turning his head a trifle to follow the other's gaze, felt one of the bags between his feet move and made a grab toward it. But the stranger had not, apparently, touched it, unless with a foot. "That," he was saying, "is Four-Fingered Phillips, one of the

cleverest confidence-men in New York. Well, so long!"

The other moved away, walking nonchalantly past the station policeman who had now wandered back to his post. Tom held his breath. But the policeman, although he undoubtedly followed the youth with his gaze for a moment, failed to act, and Tom was not a little relieved. Even if the fellow was a crook he seemed an awfully decent sort and Tom was glad he hadn't been arrested.

It was getting perilously near a quarter to four now and still Steve had not returned. Tom watched the long hand crawl toward the figure IX, saw it reach it and pass. He would, he decided then, give Steve another five minutes. His gaze fell on "Four-Fingered Phillips" and he viewed that gentleman perplexedly. He didn't look in the least like a confidence-man. He appeared to be about sixty years of age, eminently respectable and slightly infirm. He clutched a basket of fruit and an ivory-headed cane and seemed quite oblivious to everything about him. New York, reflected Tom, with something like a shudder, must be a terribly wicked place! And then, while he was still striving to discern signs of depravity under the gentle and kindly exterior of the elderly confidence-man, a young woman, lead-

ing a little boy of some three or four years of age and bearing many bundles, hurried up to "Four-Fingered Phillips," spoke, helped him to his feet and guided him away toward the train-shed. Tom sighed. It was too much for him! Of course he had read of female accomplices, but it didn't seem that a four-year-old child could be a part of the game! For the first time he wondered whether "A. L. M.," perhaps chagrined at his failure to decoy Tom to some secret lair, had deceived him about "Four-Fingered Phillips"!

Then it was ten minutes to four, good measure, and Tom, in a sudden panic, seized his bags, gazed about him despairingly and made for the train-shed. He had given Steve fair warning, he told himself, and now he could just fend for himself. But his steps got slower and slower as he approached the gate and when he reached it he set the bags down, got his ticket out and waited. After all, it would be a pretty mean trick to leave Steve. At least, he'd wait there until the last moment. The minutes passed and the hands on the clock further along the barrier crept nearer and nearer to the time set for the departure of the Brimfield accommodation. Tom wondered when the next train after this one would leave.

"Going on this train, son?" asked the gateman.

"Yes," answered Tom, and took a step toward the gate. Then he stopped and shook his head. "No, I guess not," he muttered. "When does the next one go, sir?"

"Where to?" asked the gateman, punching the ticket of a late arrival.

"Brimfield."

"Four-twelve." The gate closed and the matter was irrevocably settled. Tom took his bags and hurried back to the waiting-room and found his place again. No Steve was in sight!

"I'll give him ten minutes," said Tom savagely. "Then I'll go. And—and I won't come back the next time!"

And then, just as the clock announced the hour Steve appeared, a little flushed and breathless, but smiling broadly.

"Gee, you ought to have been with me, Tom!" he said excitedly. "There was a peach of a fire just around in the next street! Seven engines and a hook-and-ladder and hundreds of hose-carts and one of those water-towers! And most of the engines were automobiles, Tom! It was corking!"

"Maybe it was," replied Tom coldly. "I'm going to Brimfield on the four-twelve. What you going to do? Find another fire?"

"Why, no. When I saw I'd lost that other

train I thought I might as well wait and see the fire out. There's lots of time, anyway. We'll have plenty of school before we get through with it, Tom."

"That's all right," responded Tom bitterly, "but you're way off if you think it's any fun for me sitting around here and waiting for you while you have a good time going to fires!"

"You said you didn't want to go——"

"Well, what if I did?" demanded Tom, working himself into a very respectable fit of anger. "I *didn't* want to go. But that's no reason why you should leave me alone for the rest of the day to—to stave off robbers and thieves and confidence-men and—and all!"

"Oh, well, come on," said Steve. "We haven't done anything but lose a train——"

"We've lost two trains!"

"And the man says there's another at twelve minutes after."

"And we'll lose that if you stand here talking much longer," declared Tom peevishly. "Take up your bag and come along. There's only six or seven minutes."

"Where is it? Haven't you got it?"

"Got what?"

"My bag," said Steve crossly.

"Isn't it staring you in the face?" asked Tom disgustedly, indicating the suit-case against the seat. "Are you blind?"

"That? That isn't mine. Where——" Steve looked at the bag in Tom's hand and then around the floor. "*Where's mine?*"

"What!" Tom was gazing in stupefied amazement at the bag between them.

On the end appeared the legend: "A. L. M., Orange, N. J."

CHAPTER IV

OUT FOR BRIMFIELD!

Just as the conductor, snapping his watch shut, waved his hand to the engineer of the four-twelve two boys hurried down the platform and, with the assistance of a negro porter, climbed to the last platform of the moving train. From there, much out of breath, they entered the car, pushed aside a curtain and sank on to the seats of the smoking compartment. And as he did so each set a suit-case between his legs and the front of the seat in a way that suggested that only over his dead body could that bag be removed!

The first of the two, the one with his back to the engine, was a nice-looking youth of fifteen—almost sixteen, to be quite accurate—with a broad-shouldered, slim-hipped body that spoke of the best of physical condition. He had a pair of light-brown eyes, a short straight nose, a nice mouth and a rather sharp chin. His face was tanned, and slightly freckled as well, and he was tall for his age. His full name was Stephen Dana Edwards.

His companion was an inch shorter, a little heav-

ier in build, although quite as well-conditioned physically, and was lighter in colouring. His hair was several shades less dark than his friend's, although it, too, was brown, his eyes were grey and under the sunburn his skin was quite fair. His full name was Thomas Perrin Hall.

Good, healthy, frank-looking youths both of them under normal conditions, but at this present moment very far from appearing at their best. Each face held an expression of gloom and resentment; on Mr. Stephen Edwards' countenance sat what might well be termed a scowl. And, after a minute, by which time the train had plunged into the tunnel and the travellers had somewhat recovered their breaths, the latter young gentleman gave voice to a remark which went well with his expression.

"I like the way you looked after it," he said with deep sarcasm. Mr. Thomas Hall, returning the other's scowl, drummed with his heels on the suit-case.

"Why didn't you stay and look after it yourself?" he asked angrily. "It isn't my fault that you went off chasing after fire-engines."

"I didn't chase after fire-engines. You said you'd watch my bag and——"

"I did watch it!"

"Oh, yes, fine! Let someone pinch it right under your eyes! I notice you managed to keep your own bag all right!"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Tom.

Silence ensued until a conductor appeared and demanded tickets. Yielding their transportation, the boys were informed that they were in a parlour car and must pay twenty-five cents apiece to ride to Brimfield. Tom laid hold of his bag with a sigh, but Steve unemotionally produced a quarter and so Tom followed suit. When the conductor had disappeared again through the curtain Steve said:

"Why didn't they tell us this was a parlour car? How were we to know?"

"They just wanted our money, I suppose," replied Tom bitterly. "Everybody in this place is after your money. I wish I was home!"

"So do I," agreed Steve gloomily. More silence then, until,

"I don't see how he ever did it," remarked Tom. "I had both bags between my feet. He was certainly slick. I suppose when he told me to look at 'Four-Fingered Phillips' I sort of turned around and switched my legs away from the bags. But he must have been mighty quick."

"Of course he was quick," said Steve con-

temptuously. "I warned you against that fellow."

"That's all right, but I'll bet he'd have played the same trick if it had been you instead of me," replied Tom warmly.

"I'll bet he wouldn't!"

"All right!" Tom shrugged his shoulders and looked out the window. They had the compartment to themselves, which, in view of the remarks which were passed, was fortunate.

"It isn't all right, though," pursued Steve. "That bag had all my things in it: pajamas, brushes and comb and collars and handkerchiefs and—and everything! I'd like to know what I'm going to sleep in!"

"I dare say we'll get our trunks to-night," said Tom soothingly. "If we don't you can have my pajamas."

"What'll you wear?" asked Steve more graciously.

"Anything. I don't mind. I say, Steve, let's see what's in the bag he left!"

"Would you?" asked Steve doubtfully.

"Why not? He's got yours, hasn't he?"

Steve lifted the suit-case to the seat beside him and tried the catch. It was not locked and opened readily. There wasn't a great deal in it: a pair

of lavender pajamas at which Steve sniffed sarcastically, a travelling case fitted with inexpensive brushes and things and marked "A. L. M.," a pair of slippers, a magazine, a soiled collar, one clean handkerchief and a grey flannel cap with a red B sewed on the front above the visor.

"Wonder whose they are," mused Tom, as Steve spread the trousers of the pajamas out and viewed them dubiously. They were several sizes two large for Steve, but they might do if his trunk didn't come in time. "I suppose that fellow swiped this bag, found there wasn't anything valuable in it and thought he'd swap it for another."

"Maybe there was something valuable in it when he got it," said Steve. He tossed the things back and closed it again. "It's a pretty good suit-case; better than mine. Do you suppose it would do any good to advertise?"

"I don't suppose so. Besides, that cop said that he'd have them search the pawnshops. If the police don't find it I guess an advertisement wouldn't do any good, Steve."

"Well, I suppose there's no use crying over spilled milk," replied the other, setting the suit-case back in its place. "After all I can buy new things for five dollars or so and I guess father will send me the money when I tell him about it."

Tom frowned thoughtfully. Finally, "Say, Steve, if you won't tell him how it happened I'll pay for what you lost myself."

"What for?"

"I—I'd rather he didn't know, that's all."

"Oh! Well, I won't tell him you had anything to do with it, Tom. You didn't, either," he added after a moment. "It wasn't your fault, Tom. It —it would have happened to me just the same way, I'll bet."

"You could just say that the bag was stolen, couldn't you?" asked Tom more cheerfully. "I mean you needn't go into particulars, you know. It doesn't really matter *how* it happened as long as it *did* happen."

"No, of course not. I'll just say it was stolen while we were waiting for the train. I guess five dollars will be enough. Let's see. Pajamas cost two and a half, brushes——"

"You getting off at Brimfield, gentlemen?" asked the porter, putting his head through the curtains and waving a brush at them.

"Yes. Are we there?" asked Tom startledly.

"Pretty near, sir. Want me to brush you off, sir?"

"I guess so." By the time that ceremony had

been impressively performed and two dimes had changed places from the boys' pockets to the porter's, the train was slowing down for the station. A moment later they had alighted and were looking about them.

The station was small and attractive, being of stone and almost covered with vines, and beyond it, across the platform, several carriages were receiving passengers. A man in a long and shabby coat accosted them.

"Carriage, boys? Going up to the school?"

"Yes," replied Steve. "How much?"

"Twenty-five cents apiece. Any trunks?"

"Two. Can you take them up with us?"

"I'll have 'em up there in half an hour. Just you give me the checks."

"The checks," murmured Steve, a look of uneasiness coming to his face.

"Haven't you got them?" asked Tom anxiously.

Steve nodded. "I've got them all right," he said grimly, "but these are the transfer company's checks. We—we forgot to get new ones at the station!"

"Thunder!" said Tom disgustedly. "Now what'll we do?"

"I'll look after it, gentlemen," said the driver

comfortingly. "I'll have the agent telegraph the numbers back and they'll send 'em right along. It'll cost about half a dollar."

"Will we get them to-night?" asked Steve.

"You might. I wouldn't like to promise, though. Anyway, they'll be along first thing in the morning. Thank you, sir. Right this way to the carriage. I'll look after the bags."

"Not mine, you won't," replied Tom grimly, tightening his clasp on it. "I wouldn't trust the President of the United States with this bag. Anyway," he added as he followed Steve and the driver across the platform to a ricketty conveyance, "not if he lived in New York!"

By that time all the other carriages had rolled away, and while they waited for their driver to arrange with the station agent about the trunks they examined their surroundings. There wasn't much to see. The station was at the end of a well-shaded street, and beyond, across the right of way, the country seemed to begin. There were one or two houses within sight, set back amidst trees, and at the summit of a low hill the wheel of a windmill was clattering merrily. There were many hills in sight, all prettily wooded, and, on the whole, Brimfield looked attractive. They searched vainly for

a glimpse of the school buildings, and the driver, returning just then, explained in reply to their inquiry, that the school was nearly a mile away.

"You could have seen it from the train if you'd been looking," he added. "It's about a quarter of a mile from the track on the further side there. Get-ap, Abe Lincoln!"

Their way led down the straight and shaded street which presently began to show houses on either side, houses set in small gardens still aflame with autumn flowers and divided from the road by neat hedges or vine-clad fences. Then there were a few stores clustering about the intersection of the present street and one running at right angles with it, and a post-office and a fire-house and a diminutive town hall. The old horse turned to the right here and ambled westward.

"You boys are sort of late," observed the driver conversationally.

"Why, school doesn't begin until to-morrow, does it?" asked Tom.

"No. I meant you was late for to-day. About twenty boys came this afternoon, most of 'em on the train before this one. There was Prouty and Newhall and Miller and a lot of 'em. You're new boys, though, ain't you?"

They acknowledged it and the driver nodded.

"Thought I didn't remember your faces. I got a good memory for faces, I have. Well, you're coming to a fine school, boys, a fine school! I guess there ain't another like it in the country. I been driving back and forth for nigh on twelve years and I know it pretty well now. Know lots o' the boys, too. Nice fellers, they be. Always have a good word for me. Generous, they be, too. Always handin' me a tip and thinkin' nothing of it."

Steve nudged Tom with his elbow. "That's fine," he said. "You must be pretty rich by now."

"Rich? Me rich?" The driver shook his head sorrowfully. "No, sir, there ain't much chance o' gettin' rich at this business, what with the high cost of feed and all. No, gentlemen, I'm a poor man and I don't never expect to be aught else. Get-ap, Abe Lincoln!"

The village, or what there was of it, had been left behind now and the road was winding slightly uphill through woodland. The sun was slanting into their faces, casting long shadows. Now and then a gate and the beginning of a well-kept driveway suggested houses set out of sight on the wooded knolls about them. The carriage crossed

the railroad track and the driver pointed ahead of him with his whip.

"There's the school," he said; and the boys craned forward to see.

"Gee, but ain't it big!" muttered Steve.

CHAPTER V

NUMBER 12 BILLINGS

THE woods had given way to open fields, and they could follow with their eyes the course of the road ahead as it turned to the left and ran, almost parallel to the railroad, past where a pair of stone gate-posts guarded the entrance to the Academy. From the gate a drive went winding upward, hidden now and then by trees and shrubs, to where, at the crest of a hill, a half-dozen buildings looked down upon them with numberless windows.

"That's Main Hall," said Tom, "the big one in the centre. I remember it in the catalogue."

"And that's the gym at this end," added Steve. "It's a pretty good looking place, isn't it? What's the building where the tall chimney is, driver?"

"Torrence. There's rooms upstairs and a dining-room on the first floor. That chimney's from the kitchen at the back. Then the building in the middle's Main Hall, as they call it. That was the original building. I remember when there wasn't any others. The one to the left of it's Hensey

Hall. The fellows that lives there are called 'Chickens,'" chuckled the man. "Then there's Billings beyond Hensey, and The Cottage, where Mr. Fernald lives, is just around the corner, like. You can see the porch of it if you look."

But they couldn't, for at that moment the carriage turned to enter the gate and their view was cut off by a group of yellowing beeches.

Presently the carriage stopped in front of a broad flight of stone steps and the boys climbed out.

"Fifty cents, gentlemen," said the driver as he lifted the bags out. "Thank you, sir. Thank *you,* sir! I'll have your trunks up first thing in the morning. Just walk right in through the door and you'll find the office on your right. They'll look after you there. Much obliged, gentlemen. Any time you want a rig or anything you telephone to Jimmy Hoskins. That's me. Good-night, gentlemen, and good luck to you!"

Steve had contributed an extra quarter, which doubtless accounted for Mr. Hoskins' extreme affability. Bags in hand they climbed the well-worn granite steps and entered a dim, unlighted corridor. An open door on the right revealed a room divided by a railing, in front of which were a half-dozen wooden chairs and beyond which were two

desks, some filing cabinets, a book-case, a letter-press, some chairs and one small, middle-aged man with a shining bald head which was raised inquiringly as Steve led the way to the railing.

"How do you do, boys," greeted the sole occupant of the office in a thin, high voice. "What are the names, please?" As he spoke he took a card from a pile in front of him and dipped a pen in the ink-well.

"Stephen D. Edwards, sir."

"Full name, please."

"Stephen Dana."

"Very good. Place of residence?"

"Tannersville, Pennsylvania."

"A wonderful state, Pennsylvania. Parents' names, please."

"Charles L. Edwards. My mother isn't living."

"Tut, tut, tut!" said the school secretary regretfully and sympathetically. "A great misfortune, Edwards. Now, you are entering by certificate?"

"Yes, sir, from the Tannersville High School."

"And your age?"

"Fifteen; sixteen in——"

"Fifteen will do, thank you." He drew out a drawer in a small cabinet set at the left of the

broad-topped desk and ran his fingers over the indexed cards within it, finally extracting one and laying it very exactly above the one on which he had been setting down the information supplied by Steve. For a moment he silently compared the two. Then he nodded with much satisfaction. "Quite so, quite so," he said. "You will room in Billings Hall, Number 12, Edwards. You are provided with linen and other articles required?"

"Yes, sir, but my trunk hasn't got here yet."

"Quite so. One moment." He drew a telephone toward him, pressed a button on a little black board set at one end of the desk, glanced at the clock between the two broad windows and spoke into the transmitter: "Mrs. Calder? Edwards, 12 Billings, hasn't his trunk yet. Will you have his room made up, please? Eh? Quite so! Yes, 12 Billings. Just a moment." He turned to Steve. "May I ask whether the young gentleman with you is your room-mate, Hall?"

"Yes, sir."

"And his trunk, too, is missing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Quite so. Yes, Mrs. Calder, both beds, please. Thank you." He hung up the receiver and pushed the instrument aside. "That is all, Edwards. I trust you will like the school. Should

you want anything you may come to me here or you will find your Hall Master, Mr. Daley, in Number 8 Billings. Now, if you please, Hall."

Tom, in turn, answered the little man's interrogations and at last they were free to seek their room.

"Billings is the last dormitory to your right as you leave this building," said the secretary, "and you will find Number 12 on the second floor at the further end. Supper is served at six o'clock in the dining-room in Wendell, which is the last building in the other direction. As we have very few students with us yet, the supper hour is shortened and it will greatly assist if you will be prompt."

The boys thanked him and sought their room. A broad flagstone walk ran the length of the row of six buildings and along this they strode past the first building, which was Hensey, to the one beyond. The dormitories were uniform in material and style of architecture, each being three stories in height, the first story of stone and the others of red brick. The entrance was reached by a single stone step, above which hung an electric light just beginning to glow wanly in the early twilight. Inside, two slate steps led to the first floor

level and here a fireproof door divided the staircase well from the corridor. A flight of stone stairs took them to the second floor. "Rooms 11 to 20" was inscribed on the door and Steve pushed it open and led the way down to a very clean, well-lighted corridor to Number 12. There could be no mistake about it, for the figures were very plainly printed on the white door. Under the room number was a little metal frame which they afterwards discovered was for the purpose of holding a card bearing the names of the occupants. Steve pushed the door open and, followed by Tom, entered.

There was still enough light from the one broad window to see by, but Steve found a switch near the doorway and turned on the electricity. It was a pretty forlorn looking place at first glance, but doubtless the fact that the two beds were unmade, that the window-seat was empty of cushions and that the two slim chiffoniers and the desk-table were bare had a good deal to do with that first impression. The boys set their bags down and looked about them rather dejectedly. Finally,

"I suppose when we get our things around it'll look different," murmured Tom.

Steve grunted and tried a bed. "That feels pretty good," he said. "I hope Mrs. Thingama-

bob won't forget to make it. Which side do you want?"

"I don't care," replied Tom. "There isn't any difference, I guess."

There didn't appear to be. The door was at the right as you entered, and beside it was a good-sized closet. The room was about fifteen feet long, from closet to window, by some twelve feet wide. A brown grass rug filled most of the floor space. The wainscoting, of clean white pine, ascended four feet and ended in a narrow ledge or shelf, devised, as they afterwards discovered, to hold photographs or small pictures which the rules prohibited them from placing on the walls. The walls were painted a light buff. The furniture consisted of two single-width beds, two chiffoniers, a study table and two straight-backed chairs. The beds were against the opposite walls, the table in the geometrical centre of the rug, the chiffoniers occupied a portion of the remaining wall space on each side and the two chairs were set between beds and bureaus. The window was in a slight bay and there was a six-foot seat below it. The room was lighted by a two-lamp electrolier above the table, but from one socket depended a green cord, suggesting that a previous occupant had used a drop light.

"I wonder," said Steve, "where we are supposed to wash."

"Let's look for the bathroom," suggested Tom. So they returned to the silent corridor and presently discovered a commodious bath and washroom at the farther end. There were six set bowls and four tubs there, and Tom thought it was pretty fine. Steve, however, was in a mood to find fault and he objected to the bathroom on several different counts. For one thing, it was too far away. Then, too, he didn't see how twenty fellows were going to wash at six bowls. Tom, however, promptly demonstrated how one fellow could do it by returning to Number 12 and bringing back his wash-cloth. In his absence Steve had been experimenting with the liquid soap apparatus with which each bowl was supplied, and by the time Tom got back was able to tell him why he didn't approve of them! By the time they had both cleaned up it was time to find the dining-hall, and so, leaving the light burning in brazen disregard of a notice under the switch, they clattered downstairs again and set off for the other end of the Row, as the line of buildings was called.

Two or three boys were standing on the steps of Wendell when they reached it and they were

aware of their frankly curious gaze as they passed them. The dining-hall wasn't hard to find, for its double doors faced them as they entered the building. They left their caps on one of the big racks outside and rather consciously stepped inside the doorway. It was a huge room, seemingly occupying the entire first floor of the building, and held what appeared to be hundreds of tables. Only four of them were occupied now, two across the hall from the door and two at one end. A boy of about seventeen or eighteen, wearing an apron and carrying a tray of dishes, saw them, and, setting down his burden, conducted them to one of the tables nearby. There were already five boys at the board and they each and all stared silently while Steve and Tom slid into their chairs. The newcomers surmised that they, too, were new boys, for, unlike the fellows at the next table beyond, who were laughing and chatting quite light-heartedly, they applied themselves grimly and silently to their food and seemed to view each other with deep distrust.

Steve and Tom, striving against the embarrassment that held them, conversed together in whispers. "It's a whaling big room," said Steve. "Just like a hotel, isn't it? Wonder what we get to eat."

"Bet you I'll eat it, whatever it is," replied Tom. "I'm as hungry as a bear!"

They weren't left long in doubt, for a second waiter appeared very promptly and set their repast before them. There was cold roast beef, a baked potato apiece, toasted muffins, milk and cocoa, preserves and cookies. By the time they were half through their supper most of the others had finished and hurried away, removing much of the embarrassment of the situation. Steve ventured to stretch his legs comfortably under the table and turn his head to regard the occupants of the tables at the far end of the hall.

"I guess some of those are teachers," he said. "Gee, but I'd like some more meat. Would you ask for it?"

"I don't know. No one else did. These muffins are bully, only there aren't enough of them. I wonder if we'll sit here regularly."

"I don't suppose so. We'll probably be shoved to one of those tables over there by the wall. What time do you suppose they have breakfast? We'll have to ask someone, I guess. Didn't he say something about a Hall Master?"

"Yes, in Number 8. We'll stop and ask him when we go back." There was a scraping of chairs at the end of the room and several older

boys and two or three men came down the room toward the door. Steve and Tom turned to look and suddenly Tom seized his companion's arm.

"It's him!" he exclaimed.

"Who?" asked Steve.

"Or—anyway it looks lots like him," continued Tom breathlessly.

"Who looks like what?" demanded the other impatiently.

"Why, the tall fellow just going out now! See him? He—he looks just like the fellow in the station, the fellow who took your bag! The confidence-man!"

CHAPTER VI

CLUES!

"THE confidence-man?" asked Steve incredulously. "Oh, you run away and play, Tom! What would he be doing here? Don't be a silly goat!"

"Well, I suppose it isn't he, but—but he certainly looked just like him."

"Pshaw, I saw him too, didn't I? Well, that chap doesn't look anything like him."

"Then you didn't look at the fellow I meant," returned Tom doggedly. "I—I believe it was he, Steve!"

"Oh, sure," said Steve sarcastically, "and the fellow behind him is a famous second-story burglar and the man with the flannel trousers on, who looks like a teacher, is a popular murderer. He escaped from Sing Sing this morning. And the little man with the grey moustache——"

"That's all right," replied Tom earnestly, "but you'll find I'm right. It—it was he, I tell you! There couldn't be two people as much alike!"

"You'd better follow him then," laughed Steve, "and ask him for my suit-case. Tell him I want my pajamas, will you?"

But Tom refused to treat the matter so lightly. He was evidently quite convinced that he was really on the trail of the thief, and all Steve's ridicule failed to move him from that conviction. He was too anxious to begin the search for the "confidence-man" to do justice to the rest of his supper, and when, at last, they were once more outside the building he gazed up and down the Row eagerly and was disappointed to find that neither his quarry nor anyone else was visible in the half-darkness. As they passed Torrence Hall, however, an open window on the first floor sent a flood of light across the walk, and Tom, crossing the narrow strip of turf that divided building from pavement, raised himself on his tiptoes and looked into the room. The next instant a face appeared with disconcerting suddenness within a foot of his own and the occupant of the room, who had been reclining on the window-seat, enquiring abruptly:

"Well, fresh, what do you want?"

"N-Nothing, thanks," stammered Tom, withdrawing quickly.

"Keep your head out of my window then," was

the indignant response, "or I'll come out there and teach you manners!"

Tom hurried away into the friendly darkness and joined Steve, who was chuckling audibly.

"Did you find him, Tom?"

"No." And then, as Steve continued to be amused, Tom said with spirit; "I should think you'd be enough interested to help a fellow instead of giggling like a silly goat!"

"Oh, I'm not a Sherlock Holmes," replied Steve airily. "Detecting isn't in my line."

"I should think you'd want to get your bag back, though. I tell you that was really the fellow, Steve. Don't you believe me?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You don't, though," said Tom bitterly. "All right, then. You find your own bag. I'm through."

"Oh, don't say that!" begged Steve. "You were doing so nicely. Look, there's a lighted window up there, Tom. If you get a ladder now——"

"Aw, cut it!" growled Tom.

Mr. Daley was in when they rapped at the door of Number 8, on the first floor of Billings, and, accepting his invitation to enter, they found themselves in a very cosy, lamp-lighted, nicely fur-

nished study, from which a smaller room, evidently a bedroom, opened. Mr. Horace Daley was a young man with an embarrassed manner and a desire to appear quite at ease. He shook hands heartily, stumbled through a few words of welcome and arranged chairs for them. He asked a good many questions, invariably remarking "Fine!" with deep enthusiasm after every answer and smiled jovially at all times. But the boys saw that he was much more embarrassed than they were and were secretly pleased and amused. When at last the instructor had finished the usual questions and was searching around in his mind for more, Steve began asking for information. Breakfast, responded Mr. Daley, was at seven-thirty and ran half an hour. Chapel was at eight-fifteen usually, although there would be none to-morrow, as school did not officially begin until noon. The first recitation hour was nine o'clock. Dinner ran from twelve-thirty to one-thirty. Recitations began again at two and lasted until half-past three. Supper was at six. Between seven and eight the students were required to remain in their rooms and study, although on permission of the House Master one could study in the library instead. All lights were supposed to be out at ten-thirty. And Mr. Daley hoped the

boys would get on swimmingly and become very fond of Brimfield.

"I—ah—I want you to feel that I am ready and anxious to help you at any time, fellows. I—ah—want you to look on me as—ah—as a big brother and come to me in your—ah—perplexities and troubles, should you have any, and of course there are bound to be—ah—little worries at first. One has to accustom oneself to any—ah—new environment. Don't hesitate to call on me for advice or assistance. Sometimes an older head—ah—you see what I mean?"

Steve replied that they did and thanked him and, with Tom crowding at his heels, withdrew.

"He's a funny dub," confided Steve, as they made their way up to the next floor. "Guess he must be new here. What does he teach, Tom?"

"Modern languages, I think the catalogue said. His first name is Horace."

"Horace!" Steve chuckled. "It ought to be Percy. Hello, they've fixed the beds up."

The room looked far more habitable when Steve had switched the light on. Tom sighed luxuriously as he stretched himself out on one of the beds. "Bet you I'm going to do a tall line of sleeping to-night, Steve," he said. "This bed isn't half bad, either."

"Well, don't put your feet all over the spread," replied Steve. "Get up out of that and unpack your bag, you lazy duffer."

"I will in a minute. I'm tired. Say, what do you think of this place, anyway, Steve?"

"The school? Oh, I guess it'll do. You can't tell much about it yet, I suppose. I'm going to snoop around to-morrow after breakfast and see the sights. I suppose things will be a lot different when the crowd comes. I guess we're the only fellows in this dormitory to-night."

"Scared?" asked Tom, with a grin. "Remember Horace is downstairs to protect you."

"Huh! Bet you he'd crawl under the bed if he saw a burglar! I wonder if the rest of the faculty is like him."

"Oh, I dare say he's all right when you get to know him," said Tom, with a yawn. "Say, pull down that window, Steve. It's getting chilly in here."

"Get up and move around and you won't feel chilly," replied Steve unsympathetically. "Gee, I wish I had my pajamas and things."

"You might have had them by this time if you'd helped me look for that fellow," said Tom. "I'm just as certain as I am that I'm lying here

that the fellow we saw in the dining-hall was the fellow who swiped your suit-case!"

"Oh, forget that," said Steve disgustedly. "Common-sense ought to tell you that a sneak thief you saw in New York wouldn't be having his supper here at Brimfield!"

"He was, though," replied the other stubbornly.

"Oh, run away! Don't you suppose there are two people who look alike in this world?"

"Not as much alike as those two."

"Why, you didn't even get a good look at the fellow in the dining-hall. He had his back turned to you."

"Not when I saw him first, he didn't," answered Tom with a vigorous shake of his head. "I saw his face before he turned at the doorway and *it was him!*"

"You mean it was he, you ignoramus. All right, Tom, have your own way about it. Only someone ought to warn the principal about him. Why, he might run off with a couple of the buildings some night!"

"Enjoy yourself," murmured Tom. "But you'll find I was right some day, you old pig-headed chump!"

"When I do I—I'll make you a present," answered Steve, with a grin.

"Any present you'd give me wouldn't cut much figure, I guess," said the boy on the bed contemptuously.

"Is that so? Say, what'll I do with this bag?" Steve laid the suit-case in question on his bed and threw open the lid. "The pajamas look clean, anyway," he continued as he viewed them. "I suppose I'll have to wear them." He drew the cap out and set it on his head. "Wonder what the B stands for, Tom."

"What bee?" asked Tom lazily.

"The B on this cap," replied the other, studying it.

Tom suddenly sat up on the bed. "Why, Brimfield, of course!" he exclaimed in triumph. "There now! Was I right or wasn't I?"

"Shucks! It might stand for anything: Brown, Brooklyn, beans, brownbread, basketball——"

"Yes, and Brimfield! And aren't the Brimfield colours maroon-and-grey, and isn't that cap grey, and isn't that B maroon?"

"It's red."

"So is maroon, a brownish-red." Tom had deserted his bed and was turning the cap about eagerly. "This belongs to some fellow here who has

won his letter, Steve," he said with deep conviction.

"Some fellow who has *lost* his letter, you mean," replied Steve with a laugh. "All right; it will save me from buying a cap when I make the football team. How does it look on me?"

"It's too big," said Tom. "It's about a seven, I guess. That's what that fellow would wear, I think." Tom frowned thoughtfully. "Are there any more clues?" he asked, dropping the cap and seizing the pajamas excitedly.

"Sure! There are brushes in the case and they mean that the fellow has hair on his head, Tom. So there's no use looking for a bald-headed man, eh? That's what they call 'the process of elimination,' isn't it? Say, what are you trying to do with those things? Ruin them? Please remember that I've got to wear them to-night."

"Looking for laundry marks," replied Tom. "But there aren't any. I guess they're new ones." He dropped the pajamas regretfully and turned his attention to the other objects in the bag. "A magazine," he muttered.

"'Fine'!—as Horace would say. The man can read. Therefore he is not blind. Elimination again! At this rate we'll know all about him in a minute, Tom. Gee, but you're a wise guy.

Have a look at the collar and tell me the fellow's name. Go on!"

"It begins with an M, anyway," muttered Tom, studying the object in question.

"Ha!" exclaimed Steve melodramatically. "The net is closing! He has hair on his head, is not blind, wears purple pajamas and spells his name with an M! The rest is easy, Tom. Put your hat on and we'll go out and get him."

"Oh, shut up, you silly goat!" Tom had the magazine in his hands again and was glancing through it. Suddenly, with an exclamation, he thrust it into Steve's hands. "There! Hold it up and let it fall open itself, Steve!"

"All right. What about it?"

"Look where it opened!"

"Page 64."

"Yes, but what's there?"

"'Men Who Have Made Football History, by——'"

"There you are! Don't you see? That's what he was reading. He's a football man and that B is his football letter!"

"Oh! But, say, Tom, you're forgetting that this suit-case is supposed to have been stolen from someone else. Then what?"

"We don't know that it was. We just thought

so. It looks now as if it really belonged to the fellow."

"And he went and swapped it for mine? What would he do that for?"

"Maybe he thought yours might have something valuable in it," faltered Tom. "Maybe—say, Steve, perhaps he got yours by mistake!"

"Sure!" replied the other sarcastically. "Reached down and dragged it from under your feet, thinking all the while it was his. Sounds very probable—I don't think!"

"Well, you can see for yourself——"

"What was that?" interrupted Steve.

"What was what?"

"I thought I heard a knock at the door." They listened. It sounded again. Steve hustled the things back into the bag and slammed the lid shut in a twinkling. Then, "Come in!" he called.

The door opened and a tall youth stepped inside. He carried a suit-case in one hand. Tom gasped. It was the "confidence-man"!

CHAPTER VII

THE CONFIDENCE-MAN

"Hi," greeted the visitor, with a smile, as he slid the suit-case across the floor and faced the two boys. "Want to swap bags?"

"That — that's mine!" exploded Steve. "Where'd you get it?"

The visitor pulled a chair out from the wall and seated himself nonchalantly. "And that," he responded, nodding at the bag on the bed, "is mine. I didn't think the pamajas would fit you and I was mighty sure yours wouldn't fit me. So I dropped around to make an exchange."

"You're the fellow in the station!" exclaimed Tom accusingly.

"Right-o! I'm the 'sneak-thief.'"

"I knew it!" declared Tom triumphantly. "I saw you in the dining-hall and told Steve it was you and he wouldn't believe it!"

"Wouldn't he?" laughed the visitor.

"I suppose it's some sort of a silly joke," said Steve bewilderedly. "Would you mind telling me why you—why you took my bag?"

"Glad to, Edwards. You *are* Edwards, aren't you? I thought so. And this chap's Hall? Well, my name's Miller. So now we know each other. Would you mind sitting down, you fellows?"

Steve sank on to the bed and Tom retreated to the unoccupied chair, from where he viewed Miller with fascinated attention.

"It was this way, you fellows," explained Miller. "I may be a bit thin-skinned, but I don't like being called a sneak-thief. Edwards here told you, Hall, to look after your bags because there were sneak-thieves around. And then he looked at me very impolitely. After he went away I saw that you really did suspect me of being something of the sort and it occurred to me that it might be amusing to teach you chaps not to pass compliments."

"I didn't mean you to hear me," said Steve confusedly.

"I couldn't help it, as you spoke right out," replied Miller drily. "Well, so when Hall changed his seat I went along and tried to talk to him. But he was foxy, Hall was. He wasn't going to be fooled! When it got to be train time I spun him a yarn about a harmless old man across the room and got him to look at him. Then I changed the bags. I thought you fellows would take the same

train and I meant to give you back your bag then. But you weren't on it and so I suppose you were looking around the station for me. Was that it?"

"I didn't get back in time," said Steve. "We didn't find out about the bags until the train had gone. Then we did look around, and we told a policeman, and——"

Miller put his head back and laughed delightedly. "Bully!" he cried. "You chaps are wonders!"

"Well, what would you have done?" asked Tom indignantly. "How were we to know that it was a joke?"

"Oh, I'd have done the same thing, of course," answered the other soothingly. "Only the idea of the New York police department being on the lookout for me struck me as a bit humorous."

"Tom says you asked him about Tannersville," said Steve. "How did you know he was from there?"

"Not difficult," chuckled Miller. "It's on the end of his bag. And I knew he was coming to Brimfield because there was a tag on the handle. I couldn't make out your names, but I could see 'Brimfield, N. Y.' all right."

Steve and Tom smiled foolishly. "I never

thought of that," murmured Tom. "We—we thought you were a confidence-man!"

"So I thought you thought," laughed Miller. "Well, here's your property, Edwards. I dare say it was rather a mean joke to play on you, but you sort of invited it, you see."

"I don't care now that I've got it back," responded Steve philosophically. "Tom was certain you were the fellow who took my bag when he saw you in dining-hall and he was all heated up about it. Wanted to arrest you at once, I guess."

"Well, I was right, though, wasn't I?" demanded Tom. "You said it couldn't be the same chap. But I *knew!*"

"Yes, you're some sleuth," agreed Steve. "You were right and I was wrong, as you always are.'"

"How about that present you were to give me?" inquired Tom.

"You'll get it, all right; just before Christmas. Then, to Miller: "We—I had your things out of your bag," he said apologetically. "I thought I'd have to wear those pajamas."

"They'd have been a bit large, I guess," laughed Miller. "Still, they are brand-clean and you could have wrapped them around you a few times and turned them up at the feet and hands.

Well, how have you chaps found everything? All right? "

"Yes, thanks," said Steve. "We forgot to check our trunks at the Grand Central Station, though, and so we're sort of hard-up for things to wear."

"Too bad." Miller smiled. "I guess you chaps haven't travelled around much, eh? "

"Not much. This is the first time we've ever been so far east."

"Well, I don't blame you for getting a bit confused in New York. It's a tough old place to get around in unless you know the ropes. If you need collars or anything maybe I can help you out. I suppose, though, mine wouldn't fit."

"We'll get on all right, thanks," replied Steve. "Our trunks will surely be along in the morning. The man who drove us up here had the agent telegraph back for them and said he'd fetch them as soon as they came."

"Jimmy Horse? He will if he doesn't forget."

"This fellow said his name was Hoskins, I think," said Tom.

"Yes, we call him Jimmy Horse. He will probably be along with them before noon. Just depends on whether he remembers them and how busy he is. Still, not many fellows get here be-

fore the eleven o'clock train and so he ought to find time to bring the trunks. If he doesn't show up soon after breakfast you'd better telephone to him. The booth's in Main Hall, around the corner from the office. I suppose you saw old 'Quite So'?"

"Who?" asked Steve.

"Mr. Brooke, the secretary. We call him 'Quite So' because he's always saying that. Didn't you notice?"

"I did," said Tom. "I thought maybe he was Mr. Fernald, though."

"No, you won't see Josh much. He lives around the corner there in The Cottage. You'll be lucky if you don't see him, too. When you call on Josh it's usually because you've been and gone and done something. He will be at Faculty Reception to-morrow evening, though. That's in Upper Hall at eight o'clock. Better go, fellows; everyone does. Have you met your Hall Master, Mr. Daley?"

"Yes, we stopped in at his room after supper," answered Steve. "Is he——" He hesitated.

Miller laughed. "Go on and say it, Edwards! Is he what?"

"I was going to ask if he was liked."

"Oh, yes, Daley's all right. Rather shy, but

he's young yet. This is only his second year. You'll like him better when you've known him awhile. What form are you fellows in?"

"Fourth. At least, we hope we are."

"Oh, you'll make it. They'll put you in, anyway, and then drop you back if you don't keep up. That's a pleasant little trick of theirs here. You'll have Daley in French and German. Take my advice and don't have fun with him just because you can. Most of the new fellows try to make life a burden to him because he gets kind of rattled and tries to swallow his tongue when he talks. But they're generally sorry for it later. He stands about so much and then—bing! Off you go to Josh! And here's another tip, fellows. Always be dead serious with 'Uncle Sim.' That's Mr. Simkins, Greek instructor. If you can look as if you'd lost all your friends and bitten your tongue you'll make a big hit with him. He doesn't know a joke even when it's labelled and can't stand any flippancy. I made a pun in class once; I've forgotten what it was, but it was a bright and scintillant little effort; and Uncle Sim told me I'd end on the gallows. He's never forgotten that and still views me with deep suspicion."

"We will try to remember," laughed Steve. "I suppose you are in the Sixth Form?"

"Yes, this is my last year here. I ought to have been out last year, but I slipped a cog when I first came and got dropped a form. You see, I made the mistake of thinking that the principal branches were Football, Baseball and Hockey. When I'd woke up to the fact that a little attention to mathematics and languages and such foolishness was required it was too late, and—plop! —sound of falling!"

Steve recalled a similar warning of his father's and silently made up his mind then and there to not make Miller's mistake.

"Do you play football?" asked Tom. "I mean, are you on the team?"

"Yes, I—I'm on the team." Miller's smile had an odd quality that puzzled Tom at the moment. "You chaps know the game?"

"Steve has played more than I have," replied Tom. "He was on our high school team at left end last year. He's pretty good, Steve is. I didn't make the 'Varsity, but I played a couple of years with the scrubs."

"Tom plays a good game," said Steve. "I suppose it's pretty hard to get on the team here."

"About the same as anywhere," answered Miller. "If you show the goods you're all right." He viewed Steve speculatively and then turned an

Steve slipped on the tiling and fell sidewise into the water

appraising gaze on Tom. "You chaps look pretty fit for this time of year. What do you weigh, Edwards?"

"About a hundred and thirty-eight."

"You look solid, too," said Miller approvingly. "You chaps show up in togs day after to-morrow at four. Look me up and I'll see that you get a good chance to show what you can do. Where have you played, Hall?"

"At tackle, mostly. I played half a little last fall."

"You look rather likely, I think. Don't be disappointed if you don't make the first or second this year, fellows. Keep going. There's your hall team. Try for that. You'll get lots of good fun and experience. I tell you this not to discourage you but because we've kept a lot of last year's fellows and it's going to be harder than usual to break into the first team, I guess. And that means that a good many of the second team fellows will be disappointed and will have to stay where they are. Hard on them, but lucky for the school. I don't know whether you chaps understand the football situation with us?"

"I don't believe so," replied Steve.

"Well, it's like this. When I came here four years ago there wasn't any team. Before that,

five or six years before, they'd played, but about that time football got into disfavour and the faculty stopped it. I believe they allowed the hall teams to play, but that didn't last long. My second year here they lifted the ban and we started a team. Of course it didn't amount to much that first year and we got licked right and left. The next year, though, we did a good deal better, and last year we turned out a mighty good team. We lost only two games out of nine and tied one. Unfortunately, though, one of the games we lost was the game with Claflin, which is our big game of the year. Claflin has beaten us three years running now and this year we're out for revenge with a rolling R. Considering that we've played only three seasons, we've got a pretty good start. Our coach is a dandy, a chap named Robey; played with Brown the year they downed Pennsy; and he's been building up this year's team ever since he started in. At first we didn't have more than forty candidates to choose from. Last year about sixty fellows turned out and this fall I guess we'll have nearer eighty. Robey started the hall teams up again year before last and that helped a lot. The best of the hall team chaps went into the second last year, and now, this year, we've got fellows with three years' experience behind them.

So, you see, Edwards, we haven't got much football history at Brimfield and our system is still pretty new, but we're getting on! And this fall if we don't lick Claflin—well, if we don't, I'll have missed my guess.

Miller's lean, good-looking face had lighted up with enthusiasm during his recital, and, when he had ended, as though impatient to begin the campaign which was to end in the rout of the enemy, he got up and took a turn the length of the room. He didn't look the least bit in the world like a confidence-man to-night and the two boys marvelled at their earlier suspicions. Miller was tall, lean with the leanness of muscles unhampered by useless flesh, and lithe. He had very clear brown eyes, a straight nose and high cheek bones that somehow reminded Steve of the engraved portrait of John C. Calhoun that hung in the library at home. Altogether, from the top of his well-shaped head to the soles of his rubber-shod feet, he was good to look at, clean-cut, well-groomed, healthy and very much alive. Steve found himself wishing that some day he might find himself playing shoulder to shoulder with Miller. He hated to think what would happen to the enemy in such a case!

Miller paused at the table, thrust his hands into

his pockets and smiled a trifle apologetically. "Well, that's the way it is, you chaps," he went on. "So, whether you make the first or the second or neither, you keep on playing and trying. There's another year coming for you fellows; two of them, in fact. Keep that in mind, and if you don't get what you want this year keep plugging. And don't fail to come out Wednesday and do your best. You'll get a fair show and if you can play the game well enough you'll get places. Now I must run along with my bag. I'm glad to have met you chaps. If I can help you in any way don't fail to call on me. You'll find me in 7 Hensey. Come and see me anyway. Miller's the name. And, by the way, I'm glad you chaps took my little joke so decently and didn't get waxy about it. If you had, I'd probably have told it around and you'd have got a lot of joshing. As it is, no one knows it and no one will. Good-night."

And Miller, his suit-case in hand, smiled, nodded and went out. They could hear him whistling merrily until the landing door had closed behind him.

"I meant to ask him what position he played," said Steve regretfully. "I'll bet he's a corker, though!"

"I'll bet you he is," agreed Tom warmly.

"And he seemed a rattling good sort, too, didn't he?"

"Yes. And I'm glad I lost my bag. If I hadn't we mightn't have known him, seeing that he's a Sixth Form fellow."

"I guess he's sort of prominent," mused Tom. "He gives you the idea of being someone, doesn't he?"

"Oh, he's someone, all right! Do you think he really wants us to call on him, Tom? Or—or was he just being polite?"

"Both, I guess. I don't suppose we'd better call unless he asks us again. We don't want to act fresh, you know. Besides," and Tom smiled mischievously, "I'm not sure we ought to associate with him."

"Why not?" asked Steve incredulously.

"Well, seeing that he's a confidence-man——"

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE RUBBING ROOM

After breakfast the next morning, a breakfast eaten with excellent appetites, the two boys set out on a sightseeing tour about the school. They went first to the gymnasium. The big front door was locked, but Steve was not to be denied and eventually gained entrance through a little door at the rear which led into the boiler-room and from there found their way into the main basement where were situated the big swimming tank, a commodious baseball cage and a bowling alley. On the floor above they found themselves in a square hall, entered from the front door, from which other doors led to the gymnasium, the locker and bathrooms and a small office bearing the sign "Physical Director." From the hall a fireproof stairway ascended with a turn to the running-track and a large room which was evidently used as a meeting hall. Settees were neatly arranged in front of a platform, a row of low windows admitted a flood of morning sunshine and against the walls hung many photographs of ath-

letic teams. Most of them showed groups of track and field men, although a few were of hockey sevens and there were three football teams in evidence. The explorers paid more attention to these photographs than the others, and Steve, whose patriotism was already strong, read the inscriptions on the lower margins with disfavour.

"Huh!" he grumbled. "'Brimfield 0; Claflin 12'; 'Brimfield 3; Claflin 11'; 'Brimfield 6; Claflin 9.' Bet you next time it'll be some different, Tom!"

"Rather!" said Tom stoutly. "Let's go on down and see the gym."

They tried the chest-weights and tested the bars and experimented with about everything they found down there, and then went into the adjoining compartment and peered into the shower-baths and passed on the merits of the steel lockers.

"The fellow who built this gym knew what he was doing," declared Steve approvingly. "Some of these lockers have got things in them," he continued, peeping into one. "There's a bat in here, and a towel and some clothes."

Tom had wandered through a doorway at the end of the locker compartment and now summoned Steve to join him. There was a high table in the centre of the small room and a set of metal shelves

alongside which held numerous bottles and boxes. "It's the rubbing room," said Steve. "Here, get busy, Tom!" And he hoisted himself to the table and stretched out on his back.

"Yes, sir," said Tom. "Where's it hurt you? This the spot?"

And Tom began such an enthusiastic manipulation of Steve's ribs that the latter set up a howl and precipitately tumbled off the table. It was at that moment that an unpleasant voice startled them.

"Beat it, you fresh kids! You've got no business in here!"

The speaker was a heavy-set youth of perhaps nineteen years of age. He had closely-cropped ashy-brown hair over a round face from which a pair of pale-blue eyes glowered upon them. He was standing in the doorway and his hands were thrust into the pockets of a pair of very wide-hipped knickerbockers. Somehow, standing there with his sturdy, golf-stockinged legs well apart and his loose trousers pulled out at the sides, he reminded Tom of a clown at a circus, and Tom made the mistake of grinning. The big youth caught sight of the grin and stepped into the rubbing room with a deepening scowl on his face.

"Wipe it off!" he said threateningly.

Steve and Tom looked at the table.

"Wipe what off?" asked Tom, at a loss.

"Wipe that grin off your ugly face," answered the other. "And get out of here, both of you, and stay out. If you don't, I'll throw you out!"

This somewhat astounding threat caused an exchange of surprised glances between the culprits. Neither Steve nor Tom were quarrelsome, nor had they had more than a boy's usual share of fist battles, but the bullying speech and attitude of the round-faced youth was so uncalled for and exasperating that Steve's temper got the better of him for the moment.

"We weren't doing any harm here," he declared indignantly. "And we'll get out, but we're not afraid of you, even if you have got piano legs!"

The big fellow pulled his hands from his pockets with an angry growl and, clenching his fists, strode toward the boys. But at that instant footsteps sounded in the locker room, and the bully's hands dropped and he turned his head toward the door just as a small, red-haired and freckle-faced little Irishman came into sight.

"Hello, Eric the Red," he said jovially. "An' what might you be doin' down here, me boy?"

"I'm telling these fresh kids to get out of here," replied the youth. "Any objections?"

The little Irishman seemed surprised, and he smiled, but the boys noted that his small and rather greenish eyes narrowed.

"None at all, at all, me boy. If I had I'd very soon tell you, d'ye see? But what harm are they doin'? Sure, if I don't mind them bein' here, why would you?"

"They haven't any business in this room, and you know it, Danny. They're too fresh, anyway."

"Well, that's what we all are at some time. Let the boys be. Was you wantin' anything, boys?"

"No, we were just looking around the place. This door was open and we came in. We didn't know there was any harm in it," concluded Steve.

"No more there was," said Danny soothingly.

"They were rough-housing all over the place," growled the big fellow. "If you can stand it I can, though. Only"—and he turned a wrathful gaze on Steve—"if you ever get fresh with me again you'll get the licking that's coming to you, kid." He turned away toward the locker room. "Say, Danny, got a key to my locker? I've lost mine and I want to get into it a minute."

"I have not," replied Danny cheerfully. "You'll have to have one fitted, me boy."

"Hasn't anyone a master-key?" demanded the other.

"They have not. Find Patsy; he'll fit one for you in ten minutes."

"That's a funny state of things," grumbled the big fellow. "They ought to have duplicates on hand. Somebody's always losing a key, and——"

The rest was lost as the youth disappeared into the further room. Danny winked gravely at the two boys.

"Who is he?" asked Steve curiously.

"Him? His name's Sawyer, Eric Sawyer. He is sufferin' from a terrible complaint, boys, an' it makes him that cross a bear would run away from him, I'm thinkin'!"

"What's the trouble with him?"

"He has what the doctors do be callin' an ingrowin' grouch," replied Danny soberly. "'Tis due to over-exposure of the ego, they tell me, resultin' in an inflamed condition of the amoor proper, that same bein' French an' maybe beyond your comprehension."

The boys laughed and Danny swung himself to the table and patted it invitingly. "Sit down,

boys, an' tell me all about it," he said. "Who may you be, now?"

"His name is Hall and mine is Edwards," replied Steve, as he and Tom followed Danny's example and swung their feet from the table. "We're new boys."

"I suspected as much," replied Danny drily. "An' where might be your place of residence?"

"Tannersville, Pennsylvania."

"Think o' that now!" marvelled Danny. "Sure, you're a long ways from home. Is this place you say anywhere near Philadelphia?"

"Oh, no, it's a long ways from there. It's out in the western part of the state."

"I was in Philadelphia once to see the games at the college over there," pursued Danny. "It's a fine town."

"Would you mind—telling us who you are?" asked Tom.

"I would not. I have no unseemly pride. My name is Mister Daniel Parnell Moore, and I have the extraordinary honour of bein' the trainer at this institution o' learnin' and Fine Arts, the Fine Arts bein' athletics, football, baseball, hockey *an'* tinnis. An' now you know!"

"Thank you," said Tom politely. "I hope you didn't mind my asking you."

"Not a bit! You may ask me anything you like, Jim."

"My name isn't Jim," replied Tom, with a smile.

"It ain't?" The trainer seemed surprised. "Sure, he said your last name was Hall, didn't he? An' I never seen a Hall whose front name wasn't Jim."

"I'm sorry," laughed Tom, "but mine isn't; it's Tom."

Danny Moore shook his head sadly. "An' you," he said, turning to Steve, "maybe you'll be tellin' me next your name ain't Sam?"

"It's Steve."

"It might be," agreed Danny doubtfully. "But all the Edwardses I ever knew was Sams. But I'm not disputin' your word, d'ye mind! 'Tis likely you know, me boy. An' what do you think o' this rural paradise o' knowledge?"

"I guess we like it pretty well, what we've seen of it," answered Steve. "Have you been here long?"

"Two years; this is my third. It's a nice schools, as schools go. I never had much use for them, though. In the Old Country we never held with them much when I was a lad. I dare say you

boys 'll be tryin' to play football like all the rest of them? "

"We're going out for the team," said Steve, "although I guess, from what a fellow told us last night, we don't stand much show. He said that most of the last year's players were back this fall."

"That's so. We lost but four by graduation. They were some o' the best in the bunch, though. 'Tis queer how the ones that is gone is always the best, ain't it? Who was this feller you was talkin' to? "

"His name is Miller. Do you know him? I suppose you must, though."

"Miller? Do you mean Andy Miller? "

"I don't know. He didn't tell us his other name."

"The initials were A. L. M., though," reminded Tom.

"That's right. Is he a pretty good player? "

"He does fairly well," answered Danny Moore carelessly. "Not that I pay much heed to him, though. I see him around sometimes. I wouldn't think much of what he tells you, though. I don't. If you see him I'd be obliged if you'd tell him that."

But there was a twinkle in Danny's eye and Steve resolved to tell Miller no such thing. "What position does he play?" he asked.

Danny frowned thoughtfully. "It might be end, right or left. I forget. I pay no heed to the likes o' him. He's only the captain, d'ye see?"

"Captain!" exclaimed the two boys startledly, eyeing each other in amazement.

"Sure," said Danny. "An' why not?"

"Er—there's no reason," replied Steve," only —he didn't say anything about being captain."

"And why would he be after incriminating himself?" Danny demanded.

The boys digested this news in silence for a moment. Then,

"Does that fellow who was just in here play?" asked Tom.

"He does. He plays right guard, and he plays it well. I'll say that for him. Well, it's catchin' no fish I am sittin' here gassin' with you fellers. Make yourselves to home. I must be gettin' on."

"I guess we'll go, too," said Steve.

They followed the trainer up the stairway to the hall above. There he pulled a bunch of keys from his pocket and unlocked the big front door

for them. "Now, look at that, will you?" he exclaimed in amazement as he turned a small key over between his fingers. "I wouldn't be surprised if that key would fit them lockers down there. Ain't that a pity, an' him wantin' it all the time?"

The boys smiled and agreed gravely that it was. Danny sighed, shook his head and dropped the keys back into his pocket. "If you have trouble with him," he said to Steve, "hit for his head, boy, for you'll make no impression on the body of him."

"Thanks, but I don't expect he will bother me again."

"I know. I'm only tellin' you. A word to the wise, d'ye mind? Good luck to you, boys."

"Thanks. We're much obliged to you, Mr. Moore."

"Mr. Moore! Help! Listen." And Danny bent confidentially. "I won't be mindin' if you call me Mister Moore when we're by ourselves, d'ye see; but don't be doin' it in the presence of others. Them as didn't know might think I was one of the faculty, d'ye see. Call me Danny an' save me self-respect!"

When the door had closed behind them on the

grinning countenance of Danny, Steve looked at his watch and exclaimed startledly.

"Nearly ten o'clock!" he said. "And we promised to telegraph to the folks this morning. Let's see if the trunks have come and then hustle to the telegraph office."

CHAPTER IX

BACK IN TOGS

Brimfield Academy was in full swing. The term was a day old and one hundred and fifty-three youths of various ages from twelve to twenty had settled down, more or less earnestly, to the school routine. In 12 Billings trunks had been unpacked and the room had taken on a look of comfort and coziness, although several things were yet lacking to complete its livableness. For instance, an easy-chair of some sort was a crying necessity, a drop-light would help a lot, and a cushion and some pillows on the window-seat were much needed. Tom argued that if the window-seat was furnished they would not require an easy-chair, but Steve held out for the added luxury.

Both boys, Steve by a narrower margin than he suspected, had made the Fourth Form, and this afternoon, as they expeditiously changed into football togs, their glances more than once stole to the imposing piles of books on the study table, books which hinted at many future hours of hard work. Steve, pulling on a pair of much worn and

discoloured canvas trousers, sighed as his eye measured again the discouraging height of his pile. It was almost enough to spoil in advance the pleasure he looked forward to on the gridiron!

The athletic field lay behind the school buildings and was a fine level expanse of green turf some twelve acres in extent. There were three gridirons, a baseball diamond, a quarter-mile running-track and a round dozen of tennis courts there. A well-built iron-framed stand, erected in sections, and mounted on small wide-tread wheels could be moved about as occasion required, and at present was standing in the middle of the south side of the football field. On the whole Brimfield had reason to be proud of her athletic equipment, field and gymnasium, as well as of her other advantages.

The scene along the Row as the two friends clattered out of Billings was vastly different from that presented the afternoon of their arrival. Now the walk was alive with boys, heads protruded from open casements and wandering couples could be seen lounging along the gate drive or over the sloping lawn that descended to the road. First practice had been called for four o'clock and the big dial in the ivy-draped tower of Main Hall pointed its hands to three-forty when

Steve and Tom turned into the path between Torrence and Wendell leading to the gymnasium and the field beyond. Already, however, the fellows were turning their steps that way, some in playing togs but more in ordinary attire, the latter, yielding to the lure of a warm September afternoon, bent on finding an hour's entertainment stretched comfortably at ease along a side line or perched on the stand.

"That's pretty, isn't it?" asked Tom, as they looked across the nearer turf to where the broad expanse of playing ground, bordered on its further side by a wooded slope, stretched before them. The early frosts had already slightly touched the trees over there, and hints of russet-yellow and brick-red showed amongst the green. Nearer than that, more colour was supplied by an occasional dark red sweater amongst the groups loitering about the edge of the gridiron.

"It surely is pretty," agreed Steve. "I wonder if Miller's there yet. He told us to look him up, you know."

"Maybe he will give us a send-off to the coach," suggested Tom. "He could, you know, since he is captain. I guess it won't do us any harm—me, anyway—to have someone speak a word for us, eh?"

"Wonder what the coach is like," said Steve, nodding agreement. "Miller seemed to think he was pretty good. That's a dandy turf there, Tom; level as a table. They haven't marked the gridiron out yet, though."

"I suppose they don't need it for a day or two," replied the other, trying not to feel self-conscious as he neared the crowd already on hand. "I don't see Miller, do you?"

Steve shook his head, after a glance about him, and, rolling his hands in the folds of his sweater, not because the weather was cold but because that was a habit of his, seated himself at the bottom of the stand. Tom followed him and they looked about them and conversed in low voices while the throng grew with every minute. So far neither had made any acquaintances save that of Andy Miller—unless Eric Sawyer could be called such! —and they felt a little bit out of it as they saw other boys joyously hailing each other, stopping to shake hands or exchange affectionate blows, or waving greetings from a distance. They had made the discovery, by the way, that the proper word of salutation at Brimfield was "Hi"! It was invariably "Hi, Billy"! "Hi, Joe"! and the usual "Hello" was never heard. Eventually Steve and Tom became properly addicted to the

"Hi"! habit, but it was some time before they were able to keep from showing their newness by "Helloing" each other.

The stand became sprinkled with youths and the turf along the edge of the gridiron held many more. A man of apparently thirty years of age, wearing a grey Norfolk suit and a cap to match, appeared at the corner of the stand just as the bell in Main Hall struck four sonorous peals. He was accompanied by three boys in togs, one of them Captain Miller. The coach was a clean-cut chap with a nice face and a medium-sized, wiry figure. He had sandy hair and eyebrows that were almost white, and his sharp blue eyes sparkled from a deeply tanned face upon which, at the moment, a very pleasant smile played. But even as Steve and Tom watched him the smile died abruptly and he pulled a black leather memorandum book from a pocket and fluttered its leaves in a businesslike way.

Miller had predicted that this fall some eighty candidates would appear, but he had evidently been over-sanguine. Sixty seemed nearer the correct number than eighty. But even sixty-odd looked a good many as they gradually gathered nearer the coach. Steve and Tom slipped from their places and joined the throng.

" Last year's first and second team players take the east end of the field," directed Mr. Robey. " All others remain here. I'm going to tell you right now, fellows, that there's going to be a whole lot of hard work this fall, and any of you who don't like hard work had better keep away. This is a good time to quit. You'll save your time and mine too. All right now! Take some balls with you, Milton, and warm up until I get down there. Now, then, you new men, give me your names. Where's Lawrence? Not here yet? All right. What's your name and what experience have you had, my boy? "

One by one the candidates answered the coach's questions and then trotted into the field where Eric Sawyer was in command. Andy Miller and Danny Moore stood at the coach's elbow during this ceremony, and when, toward the last, Steve and Tom edged up, they were greeted by both.

" Here's the fine lad," said Danny, who caught sight of Steve before Miller did. " Mr. Sam Edwards, Coach, a particular friend of mine."

Steve, rather embarrassed, started to say that his name was not Sam, but Miller interrupted him.

" So here you are, Edwards? Glad to see you again. I've been looking for you and Hall to drop in on me. How are you, Hall? Robey, these two

have had some experience on their high school team and I think they'll bear watching. Shake hands with Mr. Robey, Edwards."

"Glad to know you," said the coach. "What's your position, Edwards?"

"I've been playing end, sir."

"End, eh? You look fast, too. We'll see what you can do, my boy. And you,—er——"

"Jim Hall," supplied Danny. "Another close friend o' me boyhood, sir, an' a fine lad, too, be-dad!"

"Tackle, sir, mostly," replied Tom.

"It's a relief to find a couple who aren't bent on being backs," said the coach with a smile to Miller. "All right, fellows. We'll give you all the chance in the world. Report to Sawyer now."

Steve and Tom, with the parting benediction of a portentious wink from Danny Moore, joined the thirty-odd candidates of many ages and sizes who, formed in two rings, were passing footballs under the stern and frowning regard of Eric Sawyer. They edged their way into one of the circles and were soon earnestly catching and tossing with the rest. If Sawyer recognised them as the boys who had aroused his ire in the rubbing room the day before, he showed no sign of it. It is probable, though, that their football attire served as a suffi-

cient disguise. Sawyer apparently took his temporary position as assistant coach very seriously and bore himself with frowning dignity. But it was not at all beneath his dignity to call erring candidates to order or to indulge in a good deal of heavy satire at the expense of those whose inexperience made them awkward. Neither Steve nor Tom, however, fell under the ban of his displeasure.

Falling on the ball followed the passing, and, in turn, gave place to starting and sprinting. For this they were formed in line and Sawyer, leaning over a ball at one end of the line, snapped it away as a signal for them to leap forward. By that time the warmth of the day and the exertion had tuckered a good many of them out and Sawyer found much fault with the performances.

"Oh, get moving, you chap in the black shirt there! Watch the ball and dig when I snap it! That's it! Go it! *Hard!* All right for you, but about a dozen of you other chaps got left entirely. Now get down there and throw your weight forward. Haven't any of you ever practised starts before? Anyone would think your feet were glued down! Get in line again. Ready now! Go, you flock of ice-wagons!"

Fortunately for the softer members of the awk-

ward squad, practice was soon over to-day, and Steve and Tom somewhat wearily tramped back with the rest across to the gymnasium, determined to have the luxury of a shower-bath even if they would have to get back into their togs again after it.

"We'd better see about getting lockers," said Steve. "I wonder where you go."

"They cost a dollar a year," answered Tom, who knew the contents of the school catalogue by heart, "and if we don't make the team we won't need the lockers."

"Sure we will. If we use the swimming pool we'll need a place to keep our clothes. And even if we don't make the big teams we'll play with the Hall, probably. Wish we had them now and didn't have to go back to the room to change. I'm tired, if you care to know it!"

"So am I," panted Tom. "Sawyer worked us hard for a warm day."

"Yes, and did you notice that fat fellow? There he is ahead there, with the striped stockings. He was just about all in and puffing like a locomotive."

"He was probably tender," said Tom.

"Yes, he—Tender! That'll do for you!" said Steve indignantly, aiming a blow at Tom's ribs

which was skilfully evaded. "Let's stop at the office in here and see if we can get lockers."

They could. Moreover, Mr. Conklin, the physical director, informed them, to their deep satisfaction, that the charge of one dollar each would be placed on their term bill if they wished. They wished with instant enthusiasm and departed, keys in hand, to find their lockers. They found the room thronged with fellows in various stages of undressing, while from the baths came deep groans and shrill shrieks and the hiss and splash of water. Their lockers were side by side at the farther end of the last aisle; and, after making certain that the keys fitted them, they began to get out of their clothes, only to make the discovery when partly disrobed that they had no towels.

"I'm going to ask someone to lend me one," said Steve. "You can use an end of it if I get it. I'm going to have that shower or bust."

A cheerful-faced youth draped in a frayed bathrobe came up at that moment and Steve sought counsel of him.

"Towel? I'd lend you one in a minute, but mine are all soiled. You can see for yourself." He nodded toward the open door of his locker on the floor of which lay a pile of what were evidently

bath towels. "I forgot to send them to the wash before I went away in the spring. If you ask Danny he might let you have one. I guess he's around somewhere."

Steve found the trainer leaning against the doorway of the rubbing room. "'Tis Sam Edwards!" greeted Danny. "An' how did it go today, me boy?"

"Pretty good, thanks. Could you lend me a couple of towels, Mister—er—Danny?"

"I doubt have I got any, but I'll look an' see," and Danny disappeared into the room behind him. "Here you are, Sam," he said in a moment. "They're small but select. Fetch 'em back when you're through with 'em, if you please. They're school property, d'ye mind, and it's me that's answerable for them."

Steve promised faithfully to restore them and bore them back in triumph to where Tom had paused in his undressing to await the result of the errand. A minute later they were puffing and blowing in adjoining baths, with the icy-cold water raining down on their glowing bodies. A brisk drying with the borrowed towels, a return to their uninviting togs and they were ready to be off. Steve couldn't find Danny, but he left the towels on the table in the rubbing room and he and Tom

climbed the stairs again. In the hall above there was a large notice board and Tom stopped to glance at some of the announcements pinned against it.

"Here a minute, Steve," he said. "Look at this." He laid a finger on a square of paper which bore in almost illegible writing this remarkable notice: "What Will You Give? Dirt Cheap! Terms Cash! One fine oak Morris chair, good as new. Three cushions, very pretty. One pair of skates. Eight phonograph records. Large assortment of bric-a-brac. Any fair offer takes them! Call early and avoid disappointment. Durkin, 13 Torrence."

"Is it a joke?" asked Steve doubtfully.

"No, there are lots of them, see." Sure enough, the board held fully a dozen similar announcements, although the others were not couched in such breezy language. There were chairs, cushions, tables, pictures, golf clubs, rugs and all sorts of things advertised for sale, while one chap sought a purchaser for "a stuffed white owl, mounted on a branch, slightly moth-eaten. Cash or exchange for books."

Steve laughed. "What do you know about that?" he asked. "Say, why don't we look at some of the things, Tom? Maybe we could save

money. Let's call on Mr. Durkin and look at his Morris chair, eh? "

"All right. Come ahead. Anything else we want? "

"I don't suppose we could pick up a cushion that would fit our window-seat, but we might. I'll write down some of the names and rooms."

"We might buy the white owl, Steve. Ever think you'd like a white owl? "

"Not with moths in it, thanks," replied Steve. There was pen and ink on the ledge outside the window of the physical director's office and Steve secured paper by tearing a corner from one of the notices. When he had scribbled down the addresses that sounded promising they set off for Torrence Hall. Number 13 was on the second floor, and as they drew near it their ears were afflicted by most dismal sounds.

"Wha-what's that? " asked Tom in alarm.

"Fiddle," laughed Steve. "Wonder if it's Mr. Durkin."

The wailing sounds ceased as Steve knocked and a voice called "Come in! " When they entered they saw a tall, lank youth standing in front of a music-rack close to the window. He held a violin to his chin and waved his bow in greeting.

"Hi! " he said. "Sit down and I'll be right

with you. I've got one bit here that's been bothering me for an hour." He turned back to his music, waved his bow in the air, laid it across the strings and drew forth sounds that made the visitors squirm in the chairs they had taken. One excruciating wail after another came from the tortured instrument, the lank youth bending absorbedly over the notes in the failing light and apparently quite oblivious to the presence of the others. Finally, with a sigh of satisfaction, he laid his bow on the ledge of the stand, stood his violin in a corner of the window-seat and turned to the visitors.

He was an odd-looking chap, tall and thin, with a long, lean face under a mop of black hair that was badly in need of trimming. His near-sighted eyes blinked from behind the round lenses of a pair of rubber-rimmed spectacles and his rather nondescript clothes seemed on the point of falling off of him.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," he said politely, "but it's getting dark and I did want to get that thing before I quit. Want to buy something?"

CHAPTER X

"CHEAP FOR CASH"

"YES, we saw that you had a Morris chair," replied Steve. He glanced perplexedly around the room. There was no Morris chair in sight, nor were any of the other articles advertised to be seen. "That is, if you're Durkin."

"That's me. The chair is downstairs in the storeroom. It's a corking chair, all right, and you're sure to want it. I'm sorry, though, you didn't get around before it got so dark, because the light down there isn't very good."

"Well, we could come again in the morning," said Steve. "There's no hurry."

"I think you'd better see it now," said Durkin with decision. "It is a bargain and if you waited someone might get ahead of you. We'll go down."

"Er—well, how much is it?"

"All cash?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so."

"It makes a difference. Sometimes fellows want to pay part cash and part promise, and

sometimes they want to trade. If you pay cash you get it cheaper, of course."

"All right. How much for it?"

Durkin looked the customers over appraisingly. "Let's have a look at it before we talk about the price," he said. "If I said five dollars now, when you haven't seen it, you might think I was asking too much.

"I surely would," replied Steve firmly. "If that's what you want for it I guess there's no use going down to see it."

"I didn't say that was the price," answered Durkin. "I'll make the price all right. You fellows come and see it." And he led the way out into the corridor. Steve glanced questioningly at Tom, and Tom smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, all right," said Steve. "Let's see it."

Durkin led the way to the lower hall and then down a pair of dark and very steep stairs to the basement. "You wait there," he instructed, "until I switch the light on. Now then, this way."

Durkin took a key from a nail and unlocked the door of a room partitioned off in a corner of the basement. The boys waited, and Durkin, having disappeared into the gloom of the storeroom, presently reappeared, dragging after him a very dusty

brown-oak chair with a slat back, broad arms and a much-worn leather seat.

"There you are," he said triumphantly, pushing the object into the faint gleam of light which reached them from the foot of the stairs. "There's a chair that'll last for years."

"But you said it was a Morris chair," exclaimed Tom. "That's no Morris chair!"

"Oh, yes, it is," Durkin assured them earnestly. "I bought it from him myself last June."

"Bought it from whom?" asked Steve derisively.

"From Spencer Morris, of course. Paid a lot for it, too. Have a look at it. It's just as good as it ever was. The leather's a little bit worn at the edges, but you can fix that all right. It wouldn't cost more than half a dollar, I suppose, to put a new piece on there."

"Look here," said Steve disgustedly, "you're a fakir! What do you suppose we want with a relic like that? You said you had a Morris chair and now you pull this thing out to show us. Is that all you've got?"

"Oh, no, I've got a lot of good things in there," answered Durkin cheerfully, peering into the gloomy recesses of the storeroom. "How about some pictures, or a pair of fine vases, or——"

"Have you another arm-chair?" asked Steve impatiently.

"No, this is the only one. I've got some dandy cushions, though, for a window-seat. Let me show you those." And Durkin was back again before Steve could stop him. Tom was grinning when Steve turned an indignant look upon him.

"Morris chair!" growled Steve. "Silly chump!"

"Here you are!" Durkin came proudly forth, heralded by a cloud of pungent dust, and tossed three cushions into the chair. "Look at those for bargains, will you? Fifty cents apiece and dirt cheap."

"We don't want cushions," growled Steve disgustedly. But Tom was examining them and presently he looked across at his chum. "We might buy these, Steve. They're not so bad."

Steve grudgingly looked them over. Finally, "We'll give you twenty-five cents apiece for them," he said.

"Twenty-five! Why, they're worth a dollar!"

"All right, you keep them."

Durkin hesitated and sighed. Finally, as the boys showed a strong inclination to seek the stairway, "Give me a dollar for the lot," he said.

Steve questioned Tom with his eyes and Tom nodded.

"All right," said Tom, "but it's more than they're worth."

"You'd have to pay a dollar and a half if you bought them new," said Durkin. "Honest! Now, about that chair——"

"Nothing doing!" interrupted Steve decisively.

"It's a good chair, and comfortable—say, sit down and just try it, will you?" Durkin removed the cushions and Steve, with a shrug, seated himself. When he got out Tom took his place. It *was* comfortable.

"How much?" asked Steve carelessly.

"Three-fifty, and dirt——"

"Give you a dollar and a half."

Durkin looked so pained that Tom quite pitied him. But he only said patiently: "You don't want to buy, you fellows; you're looking for gifts. That chair at three dollars is a real, genuine bargain, and——"

"You said three and a half before," Tom corrected.

"Did I? Well, it ought to be three and a half, but you may have it for three, even if I lose money on it."

"No fear," grunted Steve. "We'll split the difference and call it two."

"Make it two-fifty and it's yours."

"Couldn't do it. Two or nothing."

"All right," said Durkin placidly. "Take it along. Now let me show you——"

"No, sir!" laughed Steve. "You don't show us another thing, Durkin. Pile the cushions on here, Tom, and take hold."

"Wait till I lock this door and I'll give you a lift," said Durkin.

Between them they got the chair upstairs and outdoors. Then Steve paid three dollars to Durkin and the transaction was completed.

"Thank you," said Durkin. "And, say, if you want anything else, you come and see me. I've got a lot of good stuff down there. And if you want to sell anything any time I'm your man. I'll pay you good prices, fellows. So long."

The two boys felt rather conscious as they carried the chair along the Row, but although they passed a good many fellows on the way, no one viewed their performance with more than mild interest. As they were about to lift their burden through the entrance of Billings, however, the door opened from inside and a tall boy with a 'varsity football cap on the back of his head al-

most ran into them. Drawing aside to avoid them, his eyes fell on the chair and he stopped short.

"Back again!" he exclaimed delightedly. "Good old article. Where'd you find it, fellows?"

"Bought it from a fellow named Durkin, in Torrence," replied Steve.

"So 'Penny' had it?" The chap lifted the cushions heaped on the seat of the chair and viewed it interestedly. "Well, you got a chair with a history," he said. "That belonged to me three years ago. I bought it from a fellow named Lansing, and he got it second-hand from a shop in White Plains. I sold it to Spencer Morris and I suppose Penny got it from him. And the old article looks 'most as good as new! Do you mind telling me how much you paid for it?"

"Two dollars," said Steve. "He wanted three at first."

The tall chap laughed. "Two dollars! What do you know about that? I paid a dollar and a half for it and sold it to Morris for a dollar. I'll bet Penny didn't give Spencer more than fifty cents for it. He's a wonder, he is! Those cushions aren't bad. I'll give you a half for the red one."

"We don't want to sell, thanks," said Steve.

"Well, if you do, let me know. I'm in 4. My name's Fowler." And he nodded and went on. Up in their room, when they had set the armchair down and placed it to their liking, Steve said:

"Think of that long-haired idiot getting two dollars out of us for this thing. I've a good mind to go back and tell him what I think of him."

"What's the difference?" asked Tom. "It's a perfectly good chair, and if we hadn't met that Fowler chap we'd never known we'd been stung. It's worth two dollars, anyway, no matter what Durkin paid for it."

"I suppose it is," granted Steve. "And it *is* comfortable. Look here; we'll have to have another one now, or we'll be scrapping to see who gets this!"

"Not if we can find a cushion for the window-seat," said Tom. "We might see some more of those fellows you have on your list."

"To-morrow," said Steve. "It's almost supper time. I guess we didn't do so badly for three dollars. Wasn't it funny, though, we should have run into a fellow who used to own it? Wonder who Fowler is."

"I saw him at the field this afternoon," replied Tom. "I guess he's on the first team. We could

have made sixteen cents if we'd sold him the cushion he wanted."

"You're as bad as Durkin!" laughed Steve. "Wonder why he called him 'Penny,' by the way. The fellow had a regular second-hand shop down there, didn't he? Do you suppose all that truck in there belonged to him?"

"I don't know. I know one thing, though, and that is that I'm mighty glad I don't room with Durkin and have to listen to that fiddling of his!"

"That's not much worse than your snoring," replied Steve unkindly.

The next day further search revealed a cushion which just fitted the window-seat, not surprising in view of the fact that the window-seats throughout the dormitories were fairly uniform in size. The cushion cost them two dollars. It was covered with faded green corduroy and in places was pretty well flattened out by much service. But it answered their purpose and really looked quite fine when in place. Tom cast doubts on the positive assertion of the seller that it was filled with genuine hair, but Steve said that didn't matter as long as it was comfortable. They piled their three pillows on it and stretched themselves out on it, one at a time, and voted it good enough for anyone. There was a good deal of dust in it, but, as

Steve said, if they were careful about getting up and down they wouldn't disturb it! By this time Number 12 began to look quite sumptuous. They had placed several framed pictures and many photographs and trinkets against the walls and had draped the tops of the chiffoniers with towels. They had also made up a list of things to bring back with them after the Christmas holidays, a list that included all sorts of articles from a waste-basket to an electric drop-light. The latter they had not been able to find in their bargain-hunting and could not purchase in the village even if they had sufficient money. Their pocketbooks were pretty lean by the time they had been there a week, for, beside the expenditures for furnishings, they had, between them, paid two dollars for a year's subscription to the school monthly, and had made quite an outlay for stationery. Tom, in fact, was practically bankrupt and had sent an " S. O. S.," as he called it, to his father.

Meanwhile, every afternoon save Sunday they donned their togs and toiled on the gridiron. Mr. Robey was already bringing order out of chaos and the sixty-odd candidates now formed a first, second and third squad. Steve and Tom both remained in the latter for the present, nor did Tom entertain much hope of getting out of it until he

was dropped for good. Steve had made something of a reputation as a player at home, and his former team-mates there firmly expected to hear that he had made the Brimfield 'varsity without difficulty and was showing the preparatory school fellows how the game ought to be played. Tom, too, expected no less for him, and perhaps, if the truth were known, Steve entertained some such expectations himself! But Tom wasn't deceived as to his own football ability and was already wondering whether, when he was dropped from the 'varsity squad, he would be so fortunate as to make his hall team.

But there was a surprise in store for both of them. The first cut came about ten days after the opening of school, and the candidates dwindled from sixty-odd to a scant fifty. Steve's surprise lay in the fact that he was not promoted to the second squad, Tom's to the even more startling circumstance that he survived the cut!

Eric Sawyer had been relieved from his superintendence of the awkward squad and had gone to his old position of right guard on the first team. The third squad was now under the care of a youth named Marvin, a substitute quarter-back on last year's second team. He was a cheerful, hard-working little chap and the " rookies " took to

him at once. He was quick to find fault, but equally quick to applaud good work, and under his charge the third squad, composed now of some fourteen candidates, began to smooth out. A half-hour session with the tackling dummy was now part of the daily routine and many a fellow who had thought rather well of himself suffered humiliation in the pit. Steve was one of these. Tackling proved to be a weak point with him. Even Tom got better results than he did, and every afternoon Steve would scramble to his feet and wipe the earth from his face to hear Marvin's patient voice saying: "Not a bit like it, Edwards. Don't shut your eyes when you jump. Keep them open and see what you're doing. Once more, now; and tackle below the knees." And then, when the stuffed figure had been drawn, swaying crazily, across the square of spaded turf once more, and Steve had leaped upon it and twisted his arms desperately and convulsively about it, "That's a little better," Marvin might say, "but you'd never stop your man that way."

Steve was getting discouraged about his tackling and a little bit incensed with Marvin. "He takes it out on me every time," he confided to Tom one afternoon after practice. "Lots of the fellows don't do it a bit better and he just says

'Fair, Jones' or 'That's better, Freer,' and that's all there is to it. When it comes my turn, he just makes up his mind I'm not going to do it right and then rags me. Didn't I do it just as well as you did to-day, Tom?"

Tom, intensely loyal though he was, had to shake his head. "Maybe you did, Steve; I don't do it very well myself, but you—you don't seem to get the hang of it yet. You will, of course, in a day or two. I don't believe Marvin means to rag you, though; he's an awfully decent fellow."

But Tom's day or two stretched into a week or two, and one by one fellows disappeared from the awkward squad, some to the private walks of life and the consolation of hall football and some, fewer in number these, to the squad ahead. Brimfield played its first game of the year one Saturday afternoon with Thacher School, and came through with flying colours. But Thacher presented a line-up considerably younger and lighter than Brimfield's, and the victory brought no great glory to the Maroon-and-Grey. Steve and Tom watched that contest from the side-line, Tom with absorbed interest and Steve rather disgruntedly. His visions had not included any such situation as this!

That evening Steve made his first big mistake.

CHAPTER XI

"HOLD 'EM, THIRD!"

THE term was a fortnight old when Thacher went down in defeat, 10 to 3, and by that time both Steve and Tom had made acquaintances here and there, and so when, after study hour that Saturday night, Steve announced carelessly that he was "going around to Hensey to see a fellow," Tom took it for granted that his chum was off to look up some new friend. Perhaps, since they usually made calls together, he wondered a little that Steve didn't ask him along, but he didn't mind being left out on this particular occasion since he was having a good deal of trouble just then with trigonometry and wanted to put in more time on Monday's lesson.

When Steve entered Hensey he passed into the first corridor and knocked on the door of Number 7. The card there held the names: "Andrew Loring Miller—Hatherton Williams." A voice bade him enter and Steve walked in. Andy Miller and his room-mate were both in, Andy sprawled on the window-seat, which was much too short for his

long body, and Williams seated at the study table. Andy jumped up as the visitor entered.

"Glad to see you, Edwards," he said cordially. "Shake hands with Williams. Hat, this is Edwards of the fourth. Sit down, won't you?"

Williams, who was a heavy, dark-complexioned youth of eighteen with a flat nose and a broad mouth, shook hands politely, murmuring something that Steve took to mean that he was pleased to meet him, and sank back to his seat. Steve took the easy-chair that Andy pushed forward.

"Well, how are you?" asked the football captain genially. "Haven't run across any more confidence-men, I hope."

Steve smiled none too heartily and cast a glance toward Williams. But the latter's blank expression showed that the allusion meant nothing to him and proved that, as far as Williams was concerned, Miller had kept his promise of secrecy.

"No, not yet," answered Steve. "I thought I'd just drop in a minute and call."

"Of course. Glad you did. How's your friend?"

"Tom? He's fine, thanks. I—he wasn't through studying, so I didn't wait for him."

"And how's football going?" asked Andy. "Getting on pretty well?"

"I think so. Not so very well, though. I—I don't seem to please Marvin very well with tackling."

"Oh, you'll get onto that all right," said Andy cheerfully. "Fact is, I don't think a fellow ever really learns much at the dummy. It's dumping a chap in real playing that shows you what's wanted. Don't you think so, Hat?"

"Dummy practice is a good thing," answered Williams morosely.

He sat tilted back on the chair, hands in pockets, staring at the floor. He seemed a gloomy sort of fellow, Steve thought, and was relieved when Williams added: "Guess I'll run over to Johnny's for a minute," and, muttering something about being glad to have met the visitor, found a cap and wandered out.

"I suppose," said Steve, when the door had closed, "it's necessary for a fellow to learn how to tackle, but it seems to me that if you aren't awfully good at it you might get a chance to show what you can do besides that."

"I guess I don't quite understand what you mean," responded Andy.

"I mean that if I can't tackle the dummy well enough to please Marvin," answered Steve a trifle bitterly, "I do as well as lots of other fellows,

and—and it doesn't seem fair to keep me back just for that. Lots of fellows have been taken on to the second squad that can't play as well as I can, Miller."

"Oh! I see." Andy's eyes narrowed a little and he looked at Steve more intently. "You mean that you aren't getting a fair show, Edwards?"

"It doesn't seem so to me. I played with my high school team for two years at left end and—and did pretty well. Of course, I don't say that I'm as good as some of the fellows here, but I do think that I'm as good as—as a lot of them; and a heap better than three or four that have gone to the second squad lately. I don't get a chance to show what I can do where I am now, Miller. Marvin doesn't even let me into signal drill more than half the time, and then he puts me at half or tackle and I've never played either of those places. And when I told him so the other day he just laughed and said that one place was as good as another on the third! And he rags me every day about my tackling and—and I don't think it's fair! If he will give me a chance I'll pick up tackling all right. You say yourself that a fellow learns it more from playing than from dummy work."

"So I did," said Andy thoughtfully. Then,

after a moment: "Look here, Edwards, I think you've got a wrong idea in your head. If Marvin isn't satisfied with your tackling, it's because you don't do it right. Marvin's a good man and he knows football. Now, if you expect to play end you ought to know how to tackle, Edwards. What's the good of getting down the field, no matter how fast you may be, if you can't stop the man with the ball when you get there?"

"I can stop him! I've played for two years and——"

"What you've done before, Edwards, isn't any criterion with us. You may have been a regular wonder in—what's the place? Tannerstown——"

"Tannersville. I don't say I was a wonder, but——"

"Just a minute! You may have been a star on your high school team and yet not worth a copper cent to us, Edwards. I never saw your team play, but it's pretty likely that their brand of football and ours are different."

"I think we play as good football as you fellows played to-day," said Steve.

"Maybe. I'm not especially proud of the game we put up this afternoon. But that isn't the sort of football we play in mid-season, my friend. I'm sorry you think you aren't getting a fair deal,

Edwards, but you mustn't expect me to interfere with Marvin. I couldn't do it. The most I can do is give you a little piece of advice which you won't care for probably. It's this: Do as you're told to do, Edwards, and do it as hard as you know how! Just as soon as you show Marvin that you are ready to go into the second squad, you'll get there. And don't get it into your head that Marvin has it in for you or doesn't know what he is doing. Marvin's a particularly bright young man. If he wasn't he wouldn't have the third squad to weed out, for that's a job that requires a whole lot more patience and brains than any other job I know of on a football field."

Andy paused, and Steve, who was gloomily regarding a scarred knuckle, made no reply.

"Use your head, man," continued the captain in a lighter tone. "You don't suppose, do you, that we are letting anything good get by us as long as we've got eyes to see with? Not much! You probably have an idea that Marvin is keeping you off the second. He isn't. You're keeping yourself off. Mull that over, Edwards. And don't—don't do this again."

Steve looked a question.

"I mean don't come to me or to Mr. Robey with any hard-luck stories. It isn't done. If I didn't

know you a little, Edwards, I'd think you were pretty poor stuff. But I guess you didn't stop to consider how it would look. As you have done it, I'm glad you came to me instead of Mr. Robey. He wouldn't have liked it a bit." After a pause: "How's Hall getting on?"

"Pretty well, I guess," replied Steve. He stood up and frowned at the green globe of the reading lamp for a moment. Then, "I'm sorry I said anything, Miller," he remarked. "I guess it wasn't quite a fair thing to do. Only I thought —maybe——"

"You thought," said Andy cheerfully, "that perhaps I'd give you a lift. Didn't you, Edwards?"

"I suppose so."

"In other words, you wanted me to advance you over the next man on the strength of our acquaintance. Sounds as though you had rather a punk impression of me, Edwards."

"I haven't! I—I suppose, though, I didn't stop to figure it out much. It seemed to me that Marvin wasn't giving me a fair show, and here it is the last of September already, and I'm just where I started——"

"That's your fault, not Marvin's," responded Andy with a smile. He walked over and laid a

hand on the younger boy's shoulder. "Brace up, Edwards," he said kindly. "Don't waste your time looking for favours. Don't want them. Buckle down and grit your teeth and just show Marvin and the rest of us that you're so good he can't keep you on the third! That's your line, old man. And now, just as a bit of encouragement, I'll tell you that Robey and I have noticed your work in the field and we've liked it. You carry yourself like a veteran and you follow the ball well, and we both expect big things from you some day. Perhaps you won't make good this year, but there's next year and the year after. Put your nose back on the grindstone, Edwards, grin hard and tell Marvin to turn faster!"

"All right," laughed Steve. "Thanks. I guess you're right. And—and I'm not sorry now I came."

"Good! Now sit down again and let's have a chin. How do you like the school? Have you met many of the fellows yet?"

"You're making the same mistake, Edwards," said Marvin the next Monday afternoon. He spoke a trifle wearily. "Get your body in *front* of the runner and not at one side. Bind his legs together with your arms, then block him with your body and lift him back. If you do that he's *got*

to stop, and when he falls he will fall towards his own goal and not yours. Try it over now."

And when Steve had tried it over, Marvin glanced at him sharply. It seemed to him that for almost the first time the candidate had really tried! He hadn't made a clean tackle, but he had profited by the instruction that had been heaped upon him for two weeks, and little Marvin mentally patted himself on the back and was very pleased with himself, for Marvin, although he would probably never play through a big game, and knew it, was as unselfishly devoted to the interests of the team as any fellow there.

"That's a heap better, Edwards," he said eagerly. "Now see if you can't do it just right the next time."

After that it seemed to Marvin that Steve tried harder and it seemed to Steve that the little quarter-back was more appreciative. On Tuesday, as the squad jogged away from the tackling pit, Marvin said:

"Edwards, let me see you after practice, will you?"

Steve, assenting, examined Marvin's face doubtfully. A week ago he would have expected trouble from such a request, but to-day Marvin's face held only good-will and a sort of eager friendliness,

and while Steve wondered more than once during the remainder of practice what Marvin wanted of him he had no unpleasant forebodings.

There was to be a game on the morrow, the only mid-week contest of the season, and the first squad was released early. That gave Coach Robey a chance to give undivided attention to the second and third and he made the most of it. He and Andy Miller, the latter trailing a grey blanket after him, joined the third squad when the first team and substitutes had trotted away to the gymnasium and at once displayed a flattering but embarrassing interest. The Third was practising signals, eleven men in the line-up and two or three more following and watching. Marvin was driving them from a position at the rear, occasionally darting into the line, to correct a fault or illustrate a play. Unfortunately, Carmine, who was at quarter, noticed the coach's advent and immediately got flustered. When two plays had gone wrong Mr. Robey said:

"Marvin, you get in there and play quarter for a minute and give that man a chance to remember his signals. You come back here and look on, son."

After that the squad ran through plays with vim and snap. Now and then there was a mix-up, but

the signals went pretty well. After each play the coach or Captain Miller, or sometimes both, criticised and explained. The plays were few and simple; straight plunges by the backs with an occasional forward pass; but almost every time the critics found some fault to correct. Steve was playing at left tackle, fighting valiantly against an imaginary opponent, and once, trotting back to his position after a short charge over the turf, he caught the eyes of Andy and Mr. Robey fixed on him speculatively. He hoped as he settled down again and listened for the signals that Captain Miller had not told the coach of that visit on Saturday night! He wanted to forget that himself and he wanted Andy Miller to forget it.

"That'll be all, Marvin," said Mr. Robey presently. He clapped his hands. "Everyone in, please!" he called. The players flocked to the bench and picked up sweaters and blankets, while Mr. Robey and Andy conversed over the coach's little black book. Finally: "We'll have a short scrimmage, fellows," he announced. "Second squad take the east goal and kick off to the third. Pick out your men, Brownell. You too, Marvin. Who do you want to start?"

It was the first scrimmage for the third squad fellows and they raced on eagerly. Steve was

sent in as left tackle again and Tom beside him at guard. The pigskin soared away from the toe of a second squad forward, was gathered in by a third squad half-back near the twenty-yard line and was down five yards further on. "Line up, Third!" piped Carmine shrilly. "Give it to 'em hard now!"

There wasn't the finished skill displayed by the 'varsity team, but there was enough enthusiasm to almost make up for the lack of science. Back came the ball, the forwards sprang together, a half darted past right tackle, spinning like a top, faltered, went on, was stopped short by the Second's backs and borne back, grunting "Down! Down!" with all the breath left in his body.

"Second down!" proclaimed Joe Lawrence, the manager, jumping into the mêlée. "Six to go."

Mr. Robey and Andy Miller followed the teams closely, watching and shouting directions, the coach on the third squad side and Andy behind the second.

"Good work, you fellow!" applauded Andy, darting up to slap the half on the back and send him back to his place breathless but grinning. "That's the way to do it! Now, then, once more. You've got six to go. Let me see you get it.

Play lower, you fellows in the line! Get down there! Lift 'em and throw 'em back! That's the ticket!"

But the gain was scant and Carmine walked back to kick.

"Get through and block this!" panted the second's quarter, dodging back and forth for a likely opening.

"You fellow on the end there!" cried Andy. "Play back further and stop that tackle!"

"Watch for a forward pass!" warned a second squad back. "Spread out, Billy!"

"Hold 'em!" shouted Carmine.

Then came the signals, back sped the ball—a poor pass—the second came tearing through, Carmine dropped the ball and swung his leg and away it floated. A second squad back caught it near the side-line, tucked it under his arm and started back. The third squad's right end had been blocked and now, eager to make up for lost time, he overran and missed his tackle entirely and the second's back came speeding up the field near the side-line, a hastily-formed interference guarding him well. Ten yards, fifteen, twenty, and then Carmine wormed through and brought the runner to earth.

"That's one on you, right end," said Andy

sternly. "You got boxed to the king's taste that time. Now, third, see what you can do on the defence."

"Draw your line in, Carmine," called Marvin. "Look where you are, man! The ball's almost on the twenty yards! Peters, close up there! Now push 'em back, third!"

"Who's that right end, Dick?" asked Andy of Marvin.

"Chap named Holt. He isn't very good."

"How would it do to try Edwards there? He looks clever."

"That's his position, Andy, but the kid can't tackle. I'll give him a try, though. That's rotten, third! Blaisdell, where were you then? For the love of mud, man, watch the ball! Five yards right through you! Now get back there and stop them!"

"Second down, five to go," called Lawrence. "You left end on the second, you were off-side then. Next time I'll penalise you. Watch out for it."

"Same formation!" piped the second's quarter. "Make it good, fellows! Let's score now!"

"Hold 'em, third! Don't give 'em an inch. Get down there, Peters!"

"Third down!" called Lawrence a moment

later. "You've got three and a half to go, second!"

"That's the stuff!" cried Carmine jubilantly, dealing blows of approval on the bent backs of the forwards. "That's the way to stop 'em! Now once more, third!"

Then, "Fourth down and a yard and a half to go," announced Lawrence.

"Kick formation!" called the attacking quarter. "Simmons back!"

"Block this! Block it! Get through now, fellows!"

"Hold hard there, second!" There was a moment of silence. Then the ball shot back. Simmons caught it waist-high, dropped it, kicked and went down under the charge of the desperate second squad players. But the ball sailed over the cross-bar and the second had scored.

"That'll do, Holt," said Marvin. "Edwards, you play right end. Saunders!" A substitute struggled out of his sweater and came racing on. "Go in at left tackle, Saunders. Pearse, you'd better kick off."

The game went on, the second squad bringing the pigskin back twelve yards on the kick-off and then hammering through for fifteen more before the third forced them to punt. Carmine caught

on his thirty-five yards, made a short gain and was downed. Twice the third got through for a yard or two and then Carmine again fell back to kick. This time the pass was a good one and Carmine got off an excellent punt that went over the head of the opposing quarter-back and bobbed along toward the goal. The left half scuttled to his assistance and, when the ball was in the quarter's arms, threw himself in front of the first of the foe. But that particular adversary was canny. He twisted aside, leaped over the stumbling half and dived for the runner. It was a poor tackle and the man with the ball struggled on for three yards after he was caught, but the ball was down on the second's twenty-seven yards, and Steve, picking himself up from the recumbent enemy, heard Marvin shouting: "A rotten tackle, Edwards, but fine work down the field!" And, "Good stuff, you end!" approved the coach, while Tom, beaming, patted him ungently on the back.

The scrimmage was over a minute later, and, although the second had triumphed by that goal from the field, the third trotted back to the gymnasium feeling very well pleased with themselves. They had had their baptism by fire and had acquitted themselves well. Steve and Tom, panting but happy, had almost reached the gymnasium

when Steve recollected his engagement with Marvin.

"I've got to go back," he said in dismay. "I promised Marvin to see him after practice."

"There he comes now," said Tom, nodding toward where the little quarter was approaching with Mr. Robey and Andy Miller. Steve stopped beside the path and Tom fell back to wait for him.

"I forgot you wanted me to wait, Marvin," said Steve apologetically, as the trio came up.

"Oh, that's all right, Edwards. I forgot myself. Another day will do just as well. I didn't know we were to have scrimmage to-day."

"You keep up that stuff you showed to-day, Edwards," said Mr. Robey, "and we'll have you on the second the first thing you know." Then his glance passed Steve to Tom. "You too, Hall. I watched you. You're doing well. Keep it up."

The three went on, and Steve and Tom silently followed. Neither spoke until they reached the steps. Then,

"I'm awfully glad," said Tom.

"So am I," replied Steve heartily. "Bet you you'll make the second before the week is out."

"I meant about you, Steve," said Tom simply.

CHAPTER XII

CANTERBURY ROMPS ON—AND OFF

But existence at Brimfield Academy wasn't all football, by any means, nor all fun. There was a lot of hard work mixed up with the play, and both Steve and Tom found that an immense amount of study was required of them. They each had thirty recitations a week, and in both Greek and Latin their preparation at high school had, not unnaturally, been deficient. That meant hard sledding for a while. Tom realised the fact before Steve would, and so spared himself some trouble. Steve resented the extra study necessary and for the first fortnight or so trusted to luck to get him through. And for a time luck stood by him. He had a way of looking wise in class that imposed for a while on "Uncle Sim," as Mr. Simkins was called, but after Steve had fallen down three or four times the instructor scented the truth of the matter and then Steve's life became a burden to him. Mr. Simkins took delight, it seemed, in calling on him at the most unexpected moments until, one day, in sheer desperation, Steve gave utter-

ance to the answer "not prepared." That was to Uncle Sim what a red rag is to a bull! There was a scathing dressing-down then and there, followed by a visit that evening from Mr. Daley. Steve was secretly uneasy, for more than one story of summary justice on the part of the Greek and Latin instructor had reached him, but he presented a careless front to the Hall Master. Mr. Daley was plainly eager to help, but, as usual, he was embarrassed and nervous, and Steve, who had taken a mild dislike to him, resented his interference.

"The stuff's too hard," he said in answer to Mr. Daley's inquiries. "Look at the lesson we had to-day, sir; all that and this, over to here; sight reading, too. And two compositions so far this week! I just didn't have time for it last night, and so when he called on me to-day I told him I wasn't prepared. And then he—he ragged me in front of the class and gave me a page and a half to write, beside to-morrow's lesson. I can't do it, and that's all there is to it!"

"Er—yes, yes, I see. I'm sorry, Edwards. Now, let us have a look at this. Yes, there's quite a lot of it. You—ah—you didn't have much Latin before you came here, I take it?"

"Had enough," growled Steve, "but nothing

like this. I've had Cæsar and some Cicero. I never had any luck with Latin, anyway." And Steve viewed the open book with distaste.

"It's the quantity, then, you find—ah—difficult," said Mr. Daley. "As far as grammar is concerned, I take it you are—ah—well grounded, Edwards?"

"I suppose so. But look at the length of the lesson we have!"

"Yes. Very true. But, of course, to complete a certain amount of work in the year it is—ah—necessary to do quite a good deal every day. Now maybe you—ah—haven't been really setting your mind on this. I know in my own case that I very often find myself—ah—skimping, so to speak; I mean going over a thing without really getting the—ah—the meat out of it. I'm almost certain that if you really settled your mind on this, Edwards, that you'd get along very well with it. Suppose now that you give twice as much time to it to-night as you usually do. If some other study must suffer, why, let it be your French and I will let you by to-morrow if you aren't well prepared. And—ah—I wish when you've been over this you'd come down and let me—ah—go over it with you lightly. I think—I think that would be an excellent idea, Edwards."

"Oh, I'll try it," grumbled Steve, "but it isn't any use. And look at what I've got to translate for him!"

"Yes, yes, I see. Well—ah—bring your book down after awhile and we'll see what can be done. How are you getting on, Hall?"

"Pretty well, sir. I find it a bit stiff, too, but maybe after awhile I'll get the hang of it."

"That's the way to talk!" exclaimed the instructor approvingly. "That—ah—that is the right attitude, Hall. Make up your mind that it will come and it *will* come. We all have our—our problems, and the only way to do is to—ah—face them and ride straight at them. So often, when we reach them, we find them—ah—we find them so very much more trivial than we had supposed. They're like—like hills seen from a distance that look terrifically steep. When we—ah—reach them we find them easy grades after all. You see what I mean? Yes, yes. Well, I shall expect you in my study later, Edwards. I want you—both of you, that is—to realise that I am very eager to be of assistance at any time. Possibly I can't help very much,—but—ah—I am most willing, boys."

"Silly chump," growled Steve when the door

had closed behind Mr. Daley. "I wish—ah—he'd —ah—mind his own—ah—business!"

But Tom didn't smile. "I think the chap means to be awfully decent, Steve," he said thoughtfully. "The trouble is, I guess, he's scared to death of the fellows. You can see that in class."

"He's a regular granny," replied Steve. "Wish he had this stuff to do. I guess he wouldn't be so light and airy about it!"

"You'll go down and let him help you, though, won't you?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Oh, I suppose so. He can do the whole thing if he wants to. Where is my dictionary?"

With Mr. Daley's help, freely offered and grudgingly accepted, Steve weathered that crisis. And secretly he was grateful to the Hall Master, though he still pretended to believe and possibly did half believe that the latter was a sort of mollycoddle. Tom told him indignantly once that since Mr. Daley had been so awfully decent to him he ought to stop poking fun at him. To which Steve cheerfully made answer that even a mollycoddle could be decent at times!

Brimfield played Canterbury High School on a Wednesday afternoon in early October and had a

good deal of a scare. Canterbury romped on to the field like a bunch of young colts, and continued to romp for the best part of three ten-minute periods, long after Brimfield had decided that romping was no longer in good taste! Led by a small, wiry, red-headed quarter-back, who was likewise captain, and directed from the side-line by a coach who looked scarcely older than the big youth who played centre for them, the Canterbury team took the most astounding liberties with football precedents. They didn't transgress the rules, but they put such original interpretations on some of them that Mr. Conklin, who was refereeing, and Mr. Jordan, instructor in mathematics, who was umpiring, had their heads over the rules-book nearly half the time! Now and then they would march to the side-line and consult the Canterbury coach. "Where do you get your authority for that play?" Mr. Conklin would ask a trifle irritably. Thereupon, silently but with a twinkle in his eye, the coach would gravely take the book, flip the pages, lay a finger on a section and return it.

"Hm," Mr. Conklin would say. "Hm; but that seems to be in direct contradiction of another rule over here!"

"Quite likely," the coach would reply indiffer-

ently. "There are quite a few contradictions there. Of course, you may accept either rule you like, gentlemen."

Disarmed in such wise, the officials invariably decided the play to be legal, and Quarter-back Milton, of Brimfield, would protest volubly and get very, very red in the face in his attempt to carry his point and, at the same time, omit none of the respect due a faculty member! It was hard on Milton, that game, and several times he nearly had apoplexy.

Then, too, Canterbury did the most unexpected things at the most inopportune moments. When Brimfield expected her to rush the ball she was just as likely to get off a kick from close formation. When the circumstances indicated an attack on the short side of the field Canterbury's backs swung around the other end. When a close formation was to be looked for she swung her line half across the field, so confusing the opponents that they acted as though hypnotised. The forward pass was to Canterbury a play that afforded her infinite amusement. She used it in the most unheard of locations; in mid-field, under the shadow of her own goal, anywhere, everywhere and almost always when least expected. At the end of the second period Brimfield trotted away

to the gymnasium dazed and tired of brain, with the score 7 to 0 against her.

The surprising thing about the visitors was that they played as though they were just having an afternoon of good fun. They romped, like boys playing leap-frog or follow-my-leader. They romped up the field and they romped down the field and, incidentally, over and through and around their opponents. And the more care-free and happy Canterbury became, the more anxious and laboured grew Brimfield. The Maroon-and-Grey reminded one of a very staid and serious middle-aged party with a grave duty to perform trying to restrain the spirited antics of a small boy with no sense of decorum!

When the second half began, Canterbury added insult to injury. Instead of booting the pigskin down the field in an honest and earnest endeavour to obtain distance, she deliberately and with malice aforethought, dribbled it on the bias, so to speak, toward the side-line. Benson, right end, should certainly have got it, but he was so perplexed that he never thought of picking it up until a Canterbury forward had performed the task for him and had raced nearly twenty yards down the field! It was an unprecedented thing to do, or, at least, unprecedented at Brimfield, and the audience voiced

its disapproval strongly. But as the ball had gone the required ten yards there was nothing to do but smile—a trifle foolishly, perhaps—and accept the situation. And the situation was this: Canterbury had kicked off and gained over thirty yards without losing possession of the ball! But in one way that play was ill-advised. Brimfield had stood all sorts of jokes and pranks from the enemy with fairly good grace, but this enormity was too much. Brimfield was peeved! More than that, she was really angry! And, being angry, she forgot that for twenty minutes she had been outplayed and started in then and there to administer a licking to the obstreperous small boy.

Even then, however, Canterbury continued to romp and enjoy herself. She found hard sledding, but she worked down to Brimfield's eight-yard line before she was finally halted. Then her right half romped back for a try at goal and joyously booted the ball. But, to the enormous relief of the onlookers, the ball went under the bar instead of over, and Canterbury romped back again. That third period was very evenly contested, Brimfield, smarting under a sense of wounded dignity, playing well together and allowing Canterbury no more opportunities to attempt scores. The visitors, still untamed, sprang strange and

weird formations and attacks. A favourite trick was to start a play without signals, while one of her men was ostensibly tying a shoe-lace yards away or requesting a new head-guard near a side-line. It invariably happened, though, that the shoe-lace was tied in time to allow the youth to get the ball on a pass and attempt a joyous romp around the opponent's end. There was no scoring in the third period, but the whistle blew with the pigskin down on Canterbury's twenty-five yards and Brimfield with four to go on third down.

As there was no practice that afternoon, Steve and Tom saw the game from the grand stand, with two cronies named Draper and Westcott. Draper's first name was Leroy and he was called Roy. He was a tow-haired youngster of fifteen with very bright blue eyes and a tip-tilted nose that gave him a humorously impertinent look. He, like Steve and Tom, was a Fourth Former. His home was in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and, while Pittsburg was a good hundred miles from Tannersville, the fact that they were citizens of the same glorious commonwealth had drawn he and Steve together. Harry Westcott was a year older and came from a small town in Connecticut. He was Roy's room-mate in Torrence. He had a slim,

small-boned body and a good-looking face with an aquiline nose and a pair of very large soft-brown eyes. His dark hair was brushed straight back from his forehead and was always very slick. Harry was what Roy called "a fussy dresser" and affected knickerbockers and golf-stockings, negligée shirts of soft and delicate hues of lavender or green or blue and, to quote his disrespectful room-mate once more, "symphonic ties." Harry was the embodiment of aristocratic ease and always lent a "tone" to any gathering. He maintained an air of what he probably considered well-bred composure and tabooed enthusiasm. Harry never declared that a thing was "bully" or "fine and dandy"; he mildly observed that it was "not half bad." This pose amused him, doubtless, and entertained his friends, and underneath it all he was a very normal, likable chap. It was Roy Draper who broke the strained silence that had endured until the whistle put an end to the third period.

"I wouldn't give a cent for Canterbury's chances in the next period," he said. "Look at Andy's face, fellows. It has the 'blood-lust' on it. When Andy looks that way something has just got to happen!"

"He looks annoyed," assented Harry.

"You'd be annoyed if you had your lip cut the way his is," chuckled Roy.

"Do you think we'll beat them?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Nothing can save them," replied Roy conclusively. "Andy has his dander up."

"It took him long enough to get it up," grumbled Steve. "He let those fellows run rings around us in the first half."

"That's his foxy way. Now he's got them all tired out and we'll go in and rip 'em up. You watch!"

"There's Marvin going in for Milton," announced Tom. "Say, those chaps haven't made a change in their line-up yet."

"One," corrected Harry. "They put in a new right guard last period. They're a funny lot, seems to me. You'd think they were having the time of their lives."

"I like that, though," said Roy. "After all, you know, this thing of playing football is supposed to be amusement."

"It's a heap more like hard work, though," replied Harry. "Not that I ever played it much."

"Did you ever play at all?" asked Roy.

"Once or twice at grammar school. It was too fatiguing, though."

"I'll bet it was," chuckled Roy. "I'd like to see you playing, old thing."

"I did, though; played right half-back. A fellow stuck his elbow into my face and I knocked him flat. Captain said it was part of the game, you know, and I shouldn't have done it. I said that any fellow who bumped my nose would have to look for trouble. Then the umpire put me off and the game lost a real star."

"Here we go," said Steve. "Now let's see if they can carry it over."

They didn't, however, just then. Canterbury held finely in the shadow of her goal and Marvin's forward pass to Captain Miller went out at the twelve-yards. But Canterbury was forced to punt a moment later, and Brimfield took up the march again. On the adversary's thirty-yard line, with six to go on the third down, Norton, full-back, attempted an impossible drop-kick—he was standing over forty yards from the cross-bar—and made it good.

"What did I tell you?" demanded Roy, digging Steve with his elbow.

"That's only three points, though," answered Steve doubtfully. "We couldn't make a touchdown."

"It isn't over yet," said Roy confidently. "We're getting better all the time."

Canterbury gave the ball to Brimfield for the kick-off and Fowler booted it down to the opponent's fifteen yards. Andy Miller was under it all the way and upset an ambitious Canterbury back before he was well started. Canterbury tried two plunges and then punted from her twenty-five-yard line to Brimfield's fifty. Marvin caught and brought the stand to its feet by reeling off twelve yards across the field before he was downed. Then Brimfield found herself and went down the gridiron by steady plunges, plugging the Canterbury line for good gains from tackle to tackle. Norton, at full-back, was the hero of that period. Time after time he took the pigskin and landed it for a gain. Marvin, cool and heady, ran the team beautifully, and when four minutes of playing time remained, Brimfield was again knocking at Canterbury's door, the pigskin on the latter's eighteen yards.

"First down!" proclaimed Roy triumphantly. "Here's where she goes over, old thing!"

"Let her go," replied Harry. "I'm watching."

"I hope they don't try another silly field-goal," muttered Steve.

"Not on first down, they won't. Bully work, Norton! Did you see it? Three yards easily!"

Then Marvin himself cut loose for four around left end and the Canterbury coach hustled three substitutes on. But Brimfield was not to be denied now. It was first down on Canterbury's seven yards, and, with the spectators yelling like Indians, Kendall, right half, took the ball on a delayed pass, found an opening outside right tackle and slipped through and over the line for six more points.

Captain Miller kicked goal and the score stood 10 to 7. Another minute of play followed, with Brimfield again pushing the high school team before her, and then the game was over and the quartette on the stand thumped each other elatedly —all save Harry—and ambled down to join the throng that spread over the field on its homeward way.

"What did I tell you?" asked Roy. "You can't fool your uncle!"

"You hate yourself, don't you?" drawled Harry. "Come on over to the room, you fellows."

Canterbury, having cheered the victor wholeheartedly, romped home.

CHAPTER XIII

SAWYER VOWS VENGEANCE

Miter Hill School followed Canterbury the next Saturday and was an unexpectedly weak opponent. The contest was slow and lifeless and dragged its weary length along until almost twilight. Miter Hill's players were in poor physical condition and, since the afternoon was warm and close, made a poor showing. The weather affected Brimfield, too, although she was not as susceptible to injury as the other team. Miter Hill was forever getting hurt, it seemed, and the audience which had braved a remorseless sun and a horde of blood-thirsty midges soon began to grumble.

The game was further slowed down in the last two periods by the substitution of half the members of the second and third squads for the Maroon-and-Grey. Even Tom had a three or four-minute experience on the 'varsity, something which he had long ceased hoping for, while Steve played nearly all of the fourth period at right end. He did very well, there, although Miter Hill was

too weak in all departments of the game to afford any of her opponents a fair test. Toward the last the contest degenerated into more or less of a farce, Miter Hill tuckered and played out, and Brimfield, with a line-up of third and fourth substitutes, fumbling and mixing signals and running around like a hen with her head off!

By that time those who had remained so long began to view the game as what it really was, a comedy of errors, and got lots of fun out of it. When Peters, at centre, passed the ball at least two feet above the upstretched hands of Harris, who wanted to punt, and at least nine youths raced back up the field in pursuit of it, shoving, tripping, falling, rolling, and when it was Peters himself who finally dropped his one hundred and seventy-odd pounds on it, the onlookers rocked in their seats and applauded wildly. Later on another dash of humour was supplied when Carmine poised the ball for a forward pass only to discover that no one of his side was in position to take it. The quarter-back shouted imploringly, running back and across the field, dodging two or three of the enemy and by some miracle holding the ball out of harm's way all the while. When, at last, thoroughly desperate, he heard someone shout from across the field to throw the ball, he

threw it, and not until the catcher had reeled off twenty yards or more toward Brimfield's goal did Carmine discover that he had been cruelly deceived by the Miter Hill right end! Even Mr. Robey, who had been viewing the game rather grimly, had to swing on his heel to hide a smile at that fiasco. But, if the subs didn't do much in the way of attack, they at least held the enemy from crossing their line, and the weird contest at last came to a close with the one-sided score of 26 to 0.

On Monday there was a fine shake-up, for the Miter Hill game, if it had not held any thrills, had at least shown up many faults, individual and otherwise. Several second squad men went to the first as substitutes, Fowler was shifted from left tackle to left guard on the first and two members of the third squad were advanced to the second. These latter were Freer, half-back, and Hall, guard. Tom was both surprised and delighted, while seriously doubting the coach's wisdom. Later, when he found that Steve had not secured promotion as well, most of his delight vanished.

"I don't see why they put me on the second," he said, "and left you on the third. I don't play half the game you do, Steve."

Steve tried hard to be gracious, but only partly

succeeded. "I dare say they want guards and don't want ends," he replied. "Of course you've been doing good work, Tom, and deserve promotion and I'm awfully glad you've got it, but, just the same, I don't think I'm getting a square deal."

"I don't either! I wish they'd left me alone and taken you on. Peters says Robey will be disbanding the third squad in a week or so, too. Of course they'll put you on the second before that, though."

"I don't believe they will," replied Steve morosely. "I dare say I'll be dropped entirely. I thought I was getting on pretty well, but Marvin evidently doesn't think so. I'm getting kind of sick of it, anyway, Tom. I wish I'd stayed at home. I could have if I'd made a good hard kick."

That was a hard week for the 'varsity, for Coach Robey had every man on the team, with the possible exceptions of Miller and Innes, guessing. Men came in from the second squad, were tried out and usually let go again. All sorts of shifts in the line and back-field were tried. On Wednesday, Eric Sawyer, who had been looked on as a fixture at right guard, found himself ousted by Gafferty, from the second, and a member of the "bench brigade." Sawyer didn't like that at all.

It was a terrific blow to his pride and self-esteem, and for many days he was like a bear with a sore head. As a matter of fact, although Sawyer didn't suspect it, his deposal was in the nature of a taste of discipline. Sawyer had been too certain of his place and had grown careless. At the end of a week he went back again, with the warning that he would have to show more than he had been showing if he was to stay there. It was while he was still decorating the bench, however, that Steve again fell foul of him.

The unseasonably warm weather held well into the middle of October, and it was one evening a day or two after Sawyer's removal from the regular line-up that Steve and Tom, rather fagged from an hour's study in a close room, picked up Roy and Harry and went over to the gymnasium for a dip in the tank. The swimming tank was a favourite resort of the younger fellows between eight and ten at night, but, for some reason, the older boys seldom appeared there in the evenings. To-night, though, when the quartette, having changed into swimming trunks, reached the tank they found five upper-class fellows swinging their bare legs from the side of the pool and amusing themselves by criticising the antics of the youngsters. There was Eric Sawyer, Jay Fowler and

three others whom neither Steve nor Tom knew save by sight. The tank was well populated, for the warmth of the evening made the thought of cool water very agreeable, and there was much noise and splashing going on.

Steve and Harry went in from the spring-board at the deeper end of the pool, while Tom and Roy dived from the floor. A couple of tennis balls were flying around in the tank and the newcomers were soon taking their parts in the fun. Presently the group of older fellows, having grown tired of guying the "kids," dived into the water. Getting possession of one of the balls, they tried to keep it to themselves, and soon there was a merry and good-natured battle on between the five big chaps on one side and the younger occupants of the tank on the other. The echoing room rang with laughter and excited cries as the contending sides swam and floundered for the possession of the tennis ball. The big chaps had their hands full, for they were outnumbered four to one, but age and strength counted for them and not infrequently a youngster, rather than undergo a ducking at ungentle hands, yielded the ball and swam away with squeaks of terror. But there were others who fought valiantly enough, taking punishment laughingly when it came and pressing

the older fellows closely. Steve was one of the more daring of the enemy and never hesitated to dispute the possession of the ball with anyone. Once when it came skipping along half the length of the tank, he went after it hand over hand, only to miss it when Eric Sawyer reached it an instant ahead of him. Sawyer, grinning, drew back the hand holding the tennis ball.

"Want it, kid?" he asked.

Steve, guessing what was coming, dived, but he was not quick enough and the ball landed with a round smack on his right ear. A wet tennis ball, thrown from the distance of a few feet, is capable of hurting considerably, and Steve, dashing the water from his face, felt very much as though he had been kicked by a mule and had difficulty in keeping the tears from his eyes.

"Get it?" laughed Sawyer.

"Yes, and so will you," gasped Steve. The ball lay bobbing about a yard away and he grabbed it. Sawyer turned and struck out across the tank, only his head above water. Steve, thoroughly angry, aimed at him, changed his mind and swam after him, to the awed delight of the others. Sawyer, thinking he had removed himself from danger, turned at the side of the tank to look back. The next thing he knew the ball struck him fairly on

the nose, and, with a howl of pain and surprise, he disappeared under the water.

"Swim, Edwards!" shrieked the youngsters. "He'll get you!"

Steve did turn away, but it seemed too much like running and so he paused, treading water there, while the angry face of Sawyer popped into view again. The ball had bounded away and been captured by one of the youngsters, but Sawyer didn't look for it. With a leap he started toward Steve. The latter realised that Sawyer meant to wreak vengeance, and that the matter had got past the stage of fun. Here, it seemed, was a time when discretion was the better part of valour, and Steve dived.

Fortunately, he was a good swimmer. Turning quickly under water, he raced toward the far end of the tank. Dimly he heard shouts and laughter above, but he didn't come to the surface until twenty long strokes had taken him far away from where Sawyer, at a loss, was casting about the middle of the tank for him. His reappearance was heralded by shouts of applause from the younger fellows, many of whom, scenting real trouble, had scrambled out of the water. Sawyer, warned of Steve's whereabouts, looked down the tank, saw him and started pell-mell after him.

Again Steve went under, swam cautiously toward the side until he could see the white tiles within reach and then edged back the way he had come. He tried to reach the shallow end of the tank before taking breath, but the effort was too great, and when he stuck his head out for an instant he found that those at the edge of the tank had been following his under-water progress and were shouting and laughing down at him from above. More than that, however, their interest had appraised Sawyer of his whereabouts, and even as Steve, blinking the water from his eyes and replenishing his lungs, looked about him, his pursuer almost reached him.

Scorning concealment now, Steve made straight for the shallow end of the pool. Swimming like his was a revelation to many of those who saw it and a hearty burst of applause followed him all the way to the ladder, which he gained several yards in advance of Sawyer. Steve darted up the rungs and ran to the side of the tank, the fellows scattering out of his path. Sawyer pulled himself out of the water and followed, puffing with anger and exertion.

"Oh, let him go, Eric," advised Fowler. "You can't catch him."

"Yes, forget it," advised others.

But Sawyer had no idea of forgetting it. "I'll break his silly head for him," he growled as he followed Steve around the edge. Then began a chase that was both exciting and amusing. Egged on by the laughing spectators the two boys raced around the pool, Steve managing to keep always one lap ahead, slowing down when Sawyer showed signs of faltering and sprinting when the older boy, gathering fresh energy, went on again. It was a stern chase with a vengeance and might have lasted all night or until one or the other dropped in his tracks had not one of Sawyer's comrades taken a hand in the game.

Steve, breathing hard but good for many more circuits of the track, came trotting along one side of the pool where the youth in question stood with Fowler. There was a clear space of three feet between him and the edge, but just as Steve drew abreast the older chap stepped forward in his path, and Steve, trying to dodge around him, slipped on the tiling and fell sidewise into the water. Sawyer, with a grunt of triumph, plunged in from the opposite edge and was on Steve in a twinkling.

"Now, you fresh kid," exclaimed Sawyer angrily, seizing Steve's neck in a big hand as soon

as his head came up, "you're going to get what's coming to you!"

Steve, battling for breath, gasping and gurgling, tried to wrench away, but the clasp on his neck was too strong for his efforts and down he went, squirming and struggling, until his head was under water. He managed to reach around and get a grip of Sawyer's bathing trunks, but that was small advantage. The big fellow had him at his mercy. Steve's head was throbbing when at last he was allowed to lift it out of the water again, gasping for breath. But the grip on his neck didn't relax. He was conscious that the laughter had died away, conscious of Sawyer's grinning face beside him, and then down he was plunged again without warning, just managing to draw a little breath into his aching lungs before the water closed over him. It seemed that his tormentor held him down longer this time, and when, at last, he found the lights in his eyes again and could breathe once more, he was ready to give up the struggle. He had long since released his hold on Sawyer's trunks, and now his hands were clasped desperately about the other boy's wrists. And yet when Sawyer's growling voice said in his ear, "Had enough, kid? Beg my pardon?" Steve managed to shake his head.

"Want more, eh?" asked Sawyer. "All right, kid!" The clasp on his neck tightened again and he felt himself being once more thrust downward. And then, suddenly, he was free, and when, fighting his way back to the surface, he looked dazedly, there was Tom clinging to Sawyer's neck, thrashing and squirming.

"You let him be, you big bully!" Tom was saying. "You let him be!"

"Let go of my neck, you silly little fool!" gasped Sawyer, striving to break the boy's hold.

"You let him be!" gurgled Tom, half-drowned but clinging like a limpet. "You let him be, you big bully!"

Then the two went under and Steve, recovering his breath, wrenched them apart somehow and pulled poor Tom to the side of the tank. Sawyer, breathing with difficulty after Tom's choking grasp about his neck, floundered to the edge, got a sustaining grip on the rim of the tank and glared angrily at the two boys.

"I'll get you for this, you smart Alecks," he declared chokingly. "You're too fresh, both of you. Don't you know better than to grab a fellow around the neck in the water, you fool kid?"

But Tom was too far gone to answer. "That's

what you did, isn't it?" Steve demanded. "That's a funny way to talk!"

"It is, is it?" sneered Sawyer. "I'll show you something that is funny some time, and don't you forget it!"

Still growling, he swam away toward the nearer ladder, while Steve, with Roy and Harry and others helping, lifted Tom out of the tank and then followed himself. Tom was very, very sick there for a minute and the younger fellows were properly sympathetic and indignant. Presently they half carried Tom back to the locker room and helped him into his clothes, and then, Roy and Harry in attendance, Steve conveyed him back to Billings and laid him on his bed, a very weak but now quite cheerful Tom.

"He nearly drowned me, didn't he?" he asked with a grin. "But I choked him good, you bet! Bet you his old neck will be sore for a week, fellows!"

"You want to keep away from him for awhile," said Harry with a direful shake of his head. He's a mean chap when he's mad."

"Huh!" grunted Tom. "So'm I!"

CHAPTER XIV

A LESSON IN TACKLING

One direct result of that affair in the tank was that Steve found himself something of a school celebrity because of his swimming prowess. Within a few days he had good-naturedly agreed to give instruction to some half-dozen acquaintances and might have taken on a half-dozen more had he had the time for it. But there was only an odd hour or two during the day for swimming and he soon found that, although he got a good deal of fun out of instructing the others, it was taking too much of his time. It was Roy's suggestion—Roy being one of the most enthusiastic pupils—that those who wanted instruction should be on hand at a given hour each day. The suggestion was adopted, and Edwards's Swimming Class soon became a recognised institution. Five o'clock was the hour set, at which time the tank was not much used, and Steve, having returned from football practice, donned swimming trunks and repaired to the pool where he usually found from four to a dozen boys awaiting him, since, by

attending to them all at once, he could look after a dozen as easily as a few. Most of the pupils were boys of from thirteen to seventeen, although there were two older fellows in the class, Jay Fowler and Hatherton Williams. Both were Sixth Formers and both were football men. Mr. Conklin, the physical director, gave enthusiastic endorsement and encouragement. Brimfield had never supplied instruction in swimming, something which the director had long regretted, and Mr. Conklin, could he have had his way, would have made attendance at Steve's swimming class compulsory for the younger boys and so have instituted a new feature in the course of physical instruction. But Steve, willing to teach a few fellows who could already swim the finer points of the science, balked at teaching the rudiments to a half-hundred watershy youths who would have to be coaxed and coddled. Mr. Conklin tried his best to persuade him, but Steve refused firmly.

They had a whole lot of fun during that swimming hour. Fowler and a younger chap named Toll were the more accomplished performers in the class, barring Steve himself, and every session ended with several very earnest races in which Fowler, allowing Toll a five-yard handicap,

usually nosed out the younger boy in a contest of four times the length of the tank. Then there was generally a free-for-all, the fellows lining up on the edge of the pool, diving at the word from Steve and swimming to the further end, where, after touching the wall, they turned and hustled back to the start. Sometimes when football practice had been more than usually gruelling, Steve stayed out of the water and instructed from the floor, but more often he went in with the others and followed them in their practice swims. Naturally it was the fancy diving and the racing strokes that most of the fellows wanted to learn, but Steve, who had never in his life before tried to teach anyone anything, displayed a good deal of hard common-sense as an instructor and insisted that each of his pupils should master one thing thoroughly before taking up another. The result was that, barring one or two fellows who would probably in any case have failed to become expert swimmers, the class made really remarkable progress, and there came a time, although it was considerably later in the school year, when both Jay Fowler and Hatherton Williams could equal most of Steve's feats.

Tom started with the class, wisely deciding after his experience with Eric Sawyer that the

ability to keep one's head out of water was a fine thing to have. But Tom was not cut out for a human fish and soon gave it up. Roy Draper learned fairly well. He tried to induce Harry to join the class, but Harry preferred to stay with Tom and look on from the floor. When winter set in, Steve's class increased in numbers until in January he was conducting the natatory education of more than two dozen fellows. It was Mr. Conklin who arranged for an exhibition the latter part of the winter and Steve was very proud of his pupils' work on that occasion. It was held one Saturday afternoon and everyone attended, including even "Josh," more formally known as Mr. Joshua Fernald, the principal. There was fancy diving and swimming, a short game of water polo and all kinds of races, beside which Steve showed some six or eight different strokes, swam the length of the tank under water and performed other quite startling feats to the delight of his audience. Mr. Fernald shook hands with him afterwards and said several very nice things. But all this is far beyond my story, and I am only telling of it because it led the following autumn to the installation of a swimming instructor at Brimfield and the addition of swimming to the list of "required studies" for the boys of the four

lower forms. The instructor came to the school twice a week and put in two very busy hours there. So you see that fracas between Steve and Eric Sawyer that evening strangely enough resulted in important consequences and, since a knowledge of swimming is a most useful one, worked for good.

But there were other consequences of that fracas as well, and I must get back to those. Larchville Academy followed Miter Hill on Brimfield's schedule and administered the first defeat of the season to the Maroon-and-Grey. It wasn't so much that Brimfield played poorly as that Larchville played unusually well. The visitors presented an aggregation of big, well-trained youths who, most of them having been on their team the previous year, were far in advance of Brimfield in the matter of season development. Larchville's performance was what one might expect in November, but scarcely looked for in the second week of October. Her men played together all the time and her team-work stood out in strong contrast to that of Brimfield, who had scarcely begun as yet to develop such a thing. The final score was 17 to 3, and the only consolation was found in the fact that Larchville's end of it might well have been much larger. Brimfield's three points came as the result of one really bril-

liant advance for half the length of the field followed by a neat place-kick by Williams. The rest of the game was very much Larchville, and Brimfield was on the defence most of the time.

And, to give credit where it belongs, it was Eric Sawyer who, back in his position at right guard, held his side of the line firm on two anxious occasions when Larchville was striving to hammer out touchdowns under the shadow of her opponent's goal. On the whole, Brimfield played good football that day and no one justly came in for adverse criticism. Captain Miller, at left end, was spectacular under punts and played his usual hard, steady game. Innes at centre was impregnable until the final period. Williams, if a trifle weaker than his opponent, made up for it by scoring the three points for his side. Benson, at right end, was less successful than Captain Miller, but was good on the defence. The back-field, although inclined to go it "every man for himself," showed up well, especially when the enemy was in possession of the ball. Milton, the first-choice quarter-back, ran the team like a general, while Norton, the big full-back, proved the only consistent gainer through the line. In spite of the fact that she had met with defeat, Brimfield found encouragement in that contest, and, after the first

few minutes of regrets, spent the rest of the day unstintedly praising her warriors.

There was only light practice the following Monday for those who had taken part in the Saturday game, a fact which once more allowed Coach Robey to give a good deal of attention to the second and third squads. Steve was playing right end regularly now on the third, and Tom was alternating at left guard on the second. The third squad was now down to only eleven members, and when, after a hard hour of signal work and fundamentals, the second and third were lined up for a ten-minute scrimmage, Marvin had to borrow substitutes as needed from the second. There was no scoring that day, but there was an awful lot of hard work. Steve made one or two good plays down the field, but, as usual, was weak on stopping the runner when he reached him. After they were dismissed, Marvin stopped him as he was trotting off with the others.

"I say, Edwards, are you very tired?" he asked.

"N-no, I guess not," Steve replied.

"Then I wish you'd stay out a few minutes and let me try to show you about tackling." Steve glanced distastefully at the dummy and doubtfully at Marvin. But the latter smiled and

"Lift!" instructed the quarter-back. "Lift me up and yank my feet out from under me! Use your weight and throw me back!"

shook his head. "Never mind the dummy, Edwards," he said. "We'll have our fun right here. I'm going to be the dummy and you're to stop me. Did they take all the balls away? Never mind, we'll imagine the ball. Now, first of all I'm going to show you how I'd handle you if you were the runner. Stand where you are, please."

Marvin dropped in front of Steve and threw his arms about his legs just above the knees. "There's your position, Edwards," he explained. "You see I have my body in front of you. You've not only got to work against my grip around your legs but you've got to push against my weight and resistance. Try it."

Steve did try it, but he could only shuffle an inch or two.

"See?" asked Marvin. "Now, then, having tackled you, it's up to me to put you down. If I let you come forward of your own impetus you'll fall toward my goal, and by stretching out your arms you'll put the ball two yards nearer the goal than where you stand. Of course you wouldn't risk holding the ball at arms' length unless there was a possibility of getting it across a goal-line by doing it. But even if you hold the ball at your stomach you'll gain a yard by falling forward.

Now my play is to throw you the other way—like this!"

With a heave Marvin sent Steve toppling backward, much to that youth's surprise. Marvin jumped lightly to his feet, held out a hand to the other and pulled him up.

"See how it's done?" he asked cheerfully. "Now you try it. Never mind diving; just drop where you are on your hip. That's it! Swing your arms around tight! Higher up, though. Remember if you're playing end the rules prohibit you from tackling a runner below the knees. That's better. Now, then, over with me!"

But it wasn't so easy. Marvin, smuggling an imaginery ball in his arms, struggled and twisted and it was all Steve could do to keep him from gaining ground, to say nothing of throwing him back.

"Lift!" instructed the quarter-back. "Lift me up and yank my feet out from under me! Use your weight and throw me back!"

But in trying to lift the other, Steve allowed Marvin to slip past him and the quarter fell forward instead of backward.

"Try again," said Marvin. "It's got to be all one motion, so to say, Edwards. Get your man, wrap your arms around him and heave. Some-

times you can't do better than stop him. If he's coming hard, you won't be able to put him back. He's got to be more or less erect to make that go. But do it whenever you can. Now, then, once more! Down you go! That's the stuff! Bully work! Don't be afraid of hurting me! *Put me back!*"

Steve actually did it that time and was so pleased that he was grinning all over his face when Marvin scrambled to his feet again.

"That was a lot better. Once get the idea fixed in your head, Edwards, and it'll come easy. You'll do it without a thought. Once more now, and put some ginger into it. Here I come!"

Marvin walked a couple of steps forward, Steve dropped and gripped his knees, heaved and over went the quarter. A dozen times Marvin made him practise it, and then,

"All right," he said. "Now I'm going to run toward you, Edwards. I'm going to get by you if I can, too. You've got to do your best to stop me. Don't try any flying tackles, and remember that you've got to have one foot on the ground when you get me. All right now!"

Steve was glad they had the gridiron practically to themselves, for he cut a poor figure the first three times that he tried to reach the elusive quar-

ter-back. Once Marvin caught him with a straight arm and sent him toppling out of his path, once Marvin dodged him completely, twirling on one heel and darting past him beyond reach, and once the little quarter-back wrenched himself loose after being tackled. But the fourth time Steve was more successful, and after that he reached the runner every time even if he didn't always stop him short. Even when Steve had his arms gripped tightly about Marvin's knees, the latter was almost always able to somehow make another yard or two before he was willing to call "Down!" But Steve learned more in that half-hour than he had learned all the season, and when, after awhile, the two boys, panting and perspiring but satisfied with themselves, walked back to the gymnasium, Steve had the grace to thank Marvin.

"That's all right," replied the other. "I knew you could play the game, Edwards, if you could once get the hang of making a decent tackle. And I knew, too, that the trouble with you was that you'd just sort of made up your mind that you couldn't learn, that you didn't understand what I've been trying to show you. There won't be any third squad after the middle of the week, Edwards, and if you hadn't shown something more than

you've been showing in the tackling line I couldn't conscientiously have sent you up to the second."

"That was mighty decent," muttered Steve.

"Well, you mustn't take it as a personal favour, Edwards," answered Marvin with a smile, "although I'm glad to do it for you. You see, I don't want to let any good material get away. And I think you are good material, and if there was any possibility of your being of use to the second squad I wanted to get you there. Now, to-morrow we'll have another go at it, and the next day too, and every day until you can tackle a runner as well as you can handle a ball or play in the line. Is that a bargain?"

"Yes," replied Steve heartily. "And thanks, Marvin."

CHAPTER XV

STEVE WINNOWS SOME CHAFF

Two days later the third squad ceased to be and all but four of its members retired to private life. Of those four, one was Steve. Steve went on to the second team as substitute end. With him went Carmine, Peters and Saunders, while from the second a batch of half-a-dozen youths disappeared. That was the eighteenth of October. The candidates who had survived this final cut were safe to finish the season out. Of them some twenty-four were on the 'varsity and sixteen on the second. The preliminary season was ended, and with the next game, that with Benton Military College, which was to be played at Hastings-on-Sound, the serious work might be said to begin.

The second, under Brownell, became a separate aggregation, moved to its own training table in the dining-hall, had its own signals and practised on its own gridiron. It even had its own coach, for a graduate named Boutelle—soon shortened to "Boots"—appeared on the scene and took command. "Boots" was a rather large man of

thirty-odd years who had graduated from Brimfield before the days of football there. He had learned the game very thoroughly, however, at college, and was enthusiastically eager to impart his knowledge. He was a friend of Mr. Robey, and it was understood that he was giving his services as a favour to the head coach. But it was soon evident that he was thoroughly enjoying it, and he entered into his task with heart and soul. In fact he was so anxious to develop a good team that one of the first things he did was to unwittingly fall foul of the faculty. The third day there he announced that until further notice there would be morning practice between ten and twelve for all who could attend it. Morning practice lasted one day. Then faculty drew the attention of Mr. Boutelle to the rule which forbade the use of the athletic field to students during recitation hours. Mr. Boutelle was disgusted and tried to argue about it with the principal, but had to give in finally. But in spite of being required to limit practice to the afternoon hours, the second came fast and there were some very pretty games between it and the 'varsity in those days.

Steve started in as a second choice right end, a chap named Sherrard having first claim to the position. Tom was plugging along at right guard

and doing well. He was a trifle light for the place, but he was a steady player and a heady one and it took him less than a fortnight to oust his rival from the position. Tom was a surprise both to himself and to Steve. Steve had never taken his chum very seriously as a football player, probably because Tom was not the spectacular sort, but he was forced to acknowledge now that the latter had beaten him at his own game!

The members of the second didn't see the Benton game for the reason that "Boots" wouldn't consider it at all. What, waste an afternoon looking on when they might be holding practice? Not if he knew it! But the absence of some sixteen members of the second team didn't keep Brimfield from being well represented at that contest, for most every other fellow in school journeyed across to Hastings-on-Sound with the 'varsity and witnessed a very good, if in one way unsatisfactory, game. For Brimfield and Benton tussled with each other through four ten-minute periods without a score. Perhaps Benton had slightly the better of the argument, although not many Brimfieldians would acknowledge it. At least, it is true that Benton came nearer to scoring than her adversary when, on Brimfield's five-yard line, she lost possession of the ball by a fumble. On the

other hand, Brimfield tried one field-goal from an impossible angle and missed.

The next Monday, with several of the regulars out of the 'varsity line-up, the second won a 6 to 0 victory, and "Boots," choosing to ignore the 'varsity's weakness on that occasion, requested the second to observe what could be accomplished by making the most of their opportunities to practice! The fellows, quite as well pleased as their coach, although not taking to themselves so much credit as he accorded them, smiled and said, "Yes, sir," very politely and winked amongst themselves. But they liked "Boots"; liked him for his enthusiasm and for the tireless energy he displayed in their behalf. If you can't make the 'varsity it is at least something to be able to help develop it, and that is what the second was doing, very loyally and gladly. And when in the process of aiding in its development it was possible to beat it, the second shook hands with itself and was cock-o'-the-walk for days after!

Steve, like most others on the second, had relinquished hope of getting on the 'varsity. A month ago he would have scornfully refused to consider anything less than a position on the first team, but Steve had had his eyes opened not a lit-

tle. There *was* a difference between the sort of football played by Brimfield and the kind played by the Tannersville High School team, and Steve now recognised the fact. Perhaps he secretly still thought himself deserving of a place on the 'varsity—frankly, I think he did—but whereas a month ago he would not have hesitated to make the fact known, he had since learned that at Brimfield it was not considered good form to blow your own horn, as the saying is.

But if he was disappointed at falling short of the final goal of his ambition, he was nevertheless having a very good time on the second. There was a lot of fine fellows there and the spirit of camaraderie was strong, and grew stronger as the season progressed. The second was perhaps almost as proud of their organisation as was the 'varsity of theirs, and when, the week after the Benton game, they once defeated and twice tied the other team, you might have thought they had vanquished Claflin, so haughty and stuck-up did they become!

Steve played under a severe handicap that week, for once more he and "Uncle Sim" were at outs. With Mr. Daley's assistance and encouragement, and by a really earnest period of application on his own part, he had successfully weathered the

previous storm and had even been taken into Mr. Simkins' good graces. But football is a severe taskmaster, if one allows it to become such, and what with a strong desire to distinguish himself on the second—animated to some extent by the wish to show Mr. Robey what he had missed for the 'varsity—and a commendable effort to profit by Marvin's teaching, he had soon begun to ease up on his Greek and Latin, which were for him the most difficult of his courses. And now "Uncle Sim" was down on him again, as Steve put it, and on the eve of the Cherry Valley contest he was in a fair way to have trouble with the Office. Mr. Simkins' patience, perhaps never very long, was about exhausted. He had reason on his side, however, for Steve was by no means the only student who was in difficulties at that time. On Friday morning Mr. Simkins had indulged in sarcasm.

"Well, well," he said, leaning back in his chair and folding his hands, "I dare say it is too much to require you young gentlemen to study when it is such fine weather for football. What a pity it is that lessons and play conflict, is it not, Wilson?"

Wilson was too canny to make audible reply, however, and the instructor proceeded blandly.

"I wonder if Mr. Fernald would postpone reci-

tations until after you have finished football for the year. I think I'll suggest it to him. For, really, you know, this sort of thing is only wasting my time; and yours too, young gentlemen, for you might be out kicking a leather-covered bag of wind around the ground instead of sitting here cudgelling your poor brains—eh? Let us say heads, rather. The evidence is too slight to warrant the use of the first word—cudgelling your heads, then, trying to 'fake' lessons you've never looked at. I sympathise with you deeply. I commiserate. I —I am almost moved to tears. My heart goes out to you, young gentlemen."

Mr. Simkins looked so sad and woebegone that the older boys, who knew him well, trembled in their shoes. The room was very silent. With Mr. Simkins the storm was always in proportion to the calm, and the present calm was indeed portentous. The instructor fought for a moment with his emotions. Then he sighed.

"Well, until we have permission to discard recitations, I presume we must go on with them, such as they are." His gaze roved sympathetically over the class, most of whom showed a strong desire to escape his attention. Finally, "Edwards," he said softly and, as it seemed to Steve, maliciously, "let us proceed with the dull and un-

timely lesson. Kindly translate the tiresome utterances of this ignorant man who preferred wisdom and eloquence to athletics and football, Edwards. You may begin where your—hm—brilliant predecessor regretfully left off. For the moment, pray, detach your thoughts from the verdant meadows and the sprightly football, Edwards. And—ah—don't, *please* don't tell me that you are not prepared. Somehow that phrase afflicts my ears, Edwards, and were you to make use of it I should, I fear, be driven to—ah—strong measures. Now, Edwards, if you will be so kind."

Well, Steve was *not* prepared, as it happened, but he knew better than to say so, and, putting on an expression of confidence and pleasure as though Mr. Simkins had offered him the rarest of privileges, he plunged bravely into a paragraph of Cicero's Orations. But it was hard going and he was soon stumbling and hesitating, casting about desperately for words. A long, deep sigh travelled from the platform.

"That will do, Edwards," said Mr. Simkins sorrowfully. "Your rendering is novel and interesting. It is, possibly, an improvement on the original matter, but the question very naturally arises, Edwards, whether we have the right to improve on Cicero. Of course he had his limita-

tions, Edwards, and his faults, and yet ''—Mr. Simkins shook his head slowly and thoughtfully—"on the whole, Edwards, I think perhaps we should accept him as we find him, viewing his faults with a leniency becoming great minds, tolerating much, Edwards, for the sake of the—ah—occasional golden kernel to be detected in his mass of chaff by such giant intellects as yours. You *do* detect an occasional kernel of sense, Edwards?''

Steve, miserably pretending a huge interest in the cover of his book, forebore to reply.

"You don't?'' Mr. Simkins seemed both pained and surprised. "But I assure you they are there, Edwards, few in number perchance, but really to be found. Perhaps—hm—perhaps it would be a pleasant, at all events a profitable, occupation for you to make an earnest search for them. If you will see me after class, Edwards, I shall esteem it a pleasure to indicate a few pages of chaff for you to winnow. Thank you. Pray be seated.''

That was why Steve was in anything but an enviable frame of mind that Friday evening. Mr. Simkins had pointed out exactly four pages of chaff for his winnowing, and the winnowing was to be done with pen and ink and the "occasional golden kernels'' indicated by Steve on the

margin of his paper. Steve was angry and depressed.

"What's the use of trying to get along with him?" he demanded of Tom. "He has it in for me, and even if I had every lesson down pat he'd be after me all the time just the same. If it wasn't for—for the team I'd quit right now."

"Don't be a chump," replied Tom good-naturedly. "You know yourself, Steve, you haven't been studying lately."

"Well, where's a fellow to get time to study?" asked Steve. "Look at what I have to do this evening!"

"You won't do it if you don't sit down and get started," said his chum soothingly. "You tackle the other stuff and then I'll help you with that Latin. I guess we can get through it together."

"It'll take me an hour to do those six pages," grumbled Steve. "I wish Simkins would choke!"

Steve got by on Saturday, with difficulty, but had a hard time of it when the instructor requested him to give his reasons for selecting certain passages of the immortal Cicero as being worthy of especial commendation. The rest of the class found it very amusing, but Steve failed to discern any humour in the proceedings. Fortunately, Mr. Simkins was merciful and Steve's martyrdom was

of short duration. After that, for a few days at least, Steve's Latin was much better, if not the best.

The game with Cherry Valley deserves only passing mention. Viewed beforehand as a severe test of the Brimfield team's defence, the contest proved a walkover for the Maroon-and-Grey, the final score standing 27 to 6. Cherry Valley was weak in all departments of the game, and her single score, a touchdown made in the fourth period, was hammered out when all but two of the Brimfield players were first and second substitutes. Of Brimfield's tallies two were due to the skill of Hatherton Williams, who twice placed the pigskin over the bar for field-goals, once from the twenty-five yards and once from near the forty. The Brimfield backs showed up better than at any time in the season, and Norton and Kendall gained almost at will. There was still much to criticise and Mr. Robey was far from satisfied with the work of the eleven as a whole, but the school in general was vastly pleased. Coming a week after that disappointing 0 to 0 game with the military academy, the Cherry Hill game was decidedly encouraging.

So far Erie Sawyer had treated both Steve and Tom with silent contempt whenever he encoun-

tered them, although his scowls told them that they were by no means forgiven. Naturally, since Eric was on the 'varsity and the two chums on the second, they saw each other practically every afternoon on the field or in the gymnasium. But it wasn't difficult to avoid a real meeting where so many others were about. Roy Draper pretended to think that Eric was only biding his time, waiting for an opportunity to murder the two in cold blood, and delighted to draw gruesome pictures of the ultimate fate of his friends.

"I guess what he will really do," he said on the Sunday afternoon following the Cherry Valley game when he and Harry Westcott were in Number 12 Billings, "is to decoy you both over to the Sound some fine day and drown you."

"Just how will he manage it?" asked Tom, who was tumbling everything in the room about in his search for a mislaid book.

"He will probably tie heavy weights to your necks and drop you into a deep hole in the ocean," replied Roy promptly. "Then you will be eaten by sharks."

"And what would we be doing all the time he was tying the weights to us?" asked Steve sarcastically.

"Nothing, because he'd chloroform you first," returned Roy triumphantly, much pleased with his readiness. "You'd be insensible."

"Meaning without sense," murmured Harry. "It wouldn't take much chloroform."

"Huh! Don't you talk!" said Steve. "You'll never have brain-fever!"

"Ha!" scoffed Harry. "Sarcasm, the refuge of small intellects!"

"Come on," said Tom. "It's nearly three-thirty. Bother Sawyer, anyway. He's not troubling me any."

"That's all right," replied Roy, as he got up from the window-seat, "but when you wake up some fine morning and find yourself bathed in your own life's blood you'll wish you'd listened to me."

"I can't help listening to you. You talk all the time. Besides, I shouldn't call it a fine morning if I woke up dead. I—I'd think it was a very disagreeable day! Are you coming, Steve?"

"I suppose so," replied Steve with a groan. "I wish practice was in Halifax, though. I'm tired to-day." He got up from his bed, on which he had been lying in defiance of the rules, and stretched himself with a yawn.

"You'll be tireder when the first gets through with us," said Tom grimly. "Robey will sick all

his subs on us to-day, I guess; and subs always think they have to kill you just to show how good they are."

"If anyone tries any funny-business with me to-day he will get in trouble," growled Steve as he pulled his cap on and followed the others through the door. "I just hope someone will try it on!"

Tom's prediction proved correct. The first-string men were given easy practice and faced the second for only ten minutes in scrimmage. Then they were trotted off to the gymnasium and the 'varsity substitutes took their places. Steve relieved Sherrard at right end in the second period and played so poorly that he received more than one "calling-down" by "Boots." His temper seemed to be in a very ragged condition to-day, and he and Lacey, who played at left tackle on the first, got into several rumpuses in which hands were used in a manner not countenanced by the rules of football. Finally, Steve was sent off to make way for a second substitute, who played the position so well during the few minutes that remained that Steve became even more disgruntled. When practice was over he joined Tom, Roy and Harry—the latter pair having watched proceedings from the stand—and made his way to the

gymnasium in a very poor state of mind. Roy, who didn't believe in humouring folks, tried to twit Steve on his "scrapping" with Lacey, but Steve flared up on the instant and Roy was glad to change the subject. After that, Steve was gloomily silent until the gymnasium was reached.

As chance had it, the first-string fellows had just completed dressing and begun to leave the building as the others arrived there, and Steve, leading the way through the big door, collided with a boy who was on his way out. There was really plenty of room for the two to pass each other, but Steve was not in a frame of mind to give way to anyone and the result was that the other chap received the full force of Steve's shoulder.

"Who are you shoving?" demanded an angry voice.

Steve turned and confronted Eric Sawyer. "Don't take all the room if you don't want to be shoved," answered Steve belligerantly. Eric was accompanied by a younger fellow, who instantly withdrew to the safety of the further side of the hall. "You're too big, anyway," continued Steve. Tom and the others, at his heels in the open doorway, gasped and stared at Steve in amazement. Eric's countenance depicted a similar emotion for an instant, and I think he, too,

gasped. Then he sprang forward and gave Steve a push that sent him staggering away from the door.

"You fresh kid!" he growled. "You keep out of my way after this or you'll get hurt. I've stood about all of your nonsense I mean to!"

Steve leaped back with clenched hands and flashing eyes, but Harry stepped between, while Tom and Roy caught hold of Steve.

"That'll be about all, Sawyer," said Harry quietly. "You can't fight a fellow a head smaller than you, you know."

"Don't you butt in," growled Eric. "I don't intend to fight him, but I'll give him a mighty good spanking if he bothers me any more. Come on, Whipple."

Steve, struggling against the grasps and pleas of Tom and Roy, strove to get between Eric Sawyer and the door. "Spank me, will you?" he said angrily. "You let me be, you fellows! Take your hands off me! I'll show him he can't push me around!"

"I won't push you the next time," laughed Eric contemptuously. "I'll turn you over my knee! You, too, you other freshie." He glared at Tom, but Tom was too busy with Steve to make

reply. "You want to both of you keep away from me after this."

And, with a final scowl, Eric went out, followed by his companion who ventured a weak and ingratiating smile as he passed. By that time the hall was half-full of curious spectators, and Steve, finding his enemy gone, allowed himself to be conducted to the stairway.

"I'm not through with him yet," he declared. "I'll teach him to push me around like that!"

"Oh, cut it!" said Roy disgustedly. "Don't be a silly ass, Steve. You began it yourself and you got what was coming to you. A nice fight you would put up against Sawyer!"

"It's no affair of yours," replied Steve hotly. "No one asked you to butt in on it, anyway. You too, Tom! The next time you keep out of my affairs. Do you understand?"

Tom said nothing, but Roy shrugged his shoulders as they entered the locker room. "If you want to make a fool of yourself, all right, Steve. I won't interfere again. Don't worry."

"I'm no more of a fool than you are," responded Steve. "You fellows make me sick. Just because Sawyer's a little bigger, you let him kick you all over the shop."

"He's never kicked me," drawled Harry. "But if he tried to I'd run. I may not be a hero, but I know what's what! Put your head under the cold water tap, Steve."

Steve replied to that advice with a scowl, and Harry and Roy turned back to make their way upstairs again and across to Torrence.

"He acted like a silly kid," said Roy crossly.

"Yes, he was in a beast of a temper to-day, anyway. Wonder what's the matter with him. He's like a bear with a sore head. He had pluck to stand up to Sawyer, though. I'd have run."

"So would he, probably, if he hadn't been so mad," chuckled Roy. "You can be awfully brave if you get mad enough!" Then he added more seriously: "Sawyer will get him some day surely, after this."

"Oh, Sawyer isn't as bad as he's painted, I guess," replied Harry. "The trouble with Steve is that he's pig-headed or something."

"He fancies himself a bit," said Roy. "He will get over it after he's been here longer. You can't help liking him, though, and I'll be sorry if he gets out."

"Why should he get out?" asked Harry in surprise.

Roy shrugged. "Maybe he won't, but he will

if he doesn't get a hunch and buckle down to study. 'Uncle Sim' has got it in for him hard. Some fine day Steve will get an invitation to the Cottage, Josh will tell him a few things, Steve will get lumpy and—good-night! You see if it doesn't turn out that way."

"Why the dickens doesn't he study, then?" grumbled Harry. "He's got brains enough."

"Oh, sure, he's got the brains," answered Roy as he held open the door at Torrence, "but he hasn't discovered yet that there's someone else to think of besides Steve. If he doesn't want to do a thing he won't—unless he's made to. Look at the way he played to-day! Just because he felt lumpy he didn't think it was worth while to do anything but scrap with that other chap. Folks won't stand for that very long and some day Steve will wake up with a bang!"

"You going over to swim?" asked Harry when they had reached their room.

Roy shook his head gently. "Not this afternoon, I think, thanking you just the same. I'd be afraid Steve would pull me under water and drown me!" Roy chuckled as he seated himself and, thrusting his hands in his trousers pockets, surveyed his shoes smilingly. "Poor old Steve! He's in for a heap of trouble, I guess, before he

gets ready to settle down as a useful member of our charming little community."

"Seems to me," said Harry, "about the best thing you do to-day is predict trouble for folks. You're as bad as What's-his-name's raven; you croak."

"The gentleman's name was Poe," returned Roy sweetly. "But perhaps you've never studied American literature."

"I thought Poe was a football hero at Princeton or somewhere," laughed Harry. "What did he ever do for American literature?"

"American history was more in his line," replied Roy. "Football history. Find your ball and let's go down and pass. I won't croak a single, solitary croak, old thing."

CHAPTER XVI

MR. DALEY IS OUT

The reason for Steve's ill-temper was the receipt that morning of a letter from his father. Mr. Edwards wrote that he had just been informed by the principal that Steve's work was far from satisfactory. "He tells me," wrote Mr. Edwards, "that your general attitude toward your studies is careless and that in Latin especially you are not keeping up with your class. Now I can't be worried by this sort of thing. I give you fair warning that if you don't mend your ways you'll be taken out of school and put to work here in the office, and there won't be any more talk about college. If Mr. Fernald had said you were not able to do the work, that would be another thing, but he distinctly accuses you of not trying and not caring. I suppose the whole amount of the matter is that you're paying too much attention to football. If I get another complaint about you this year I shall write Mr. Fernald to forbid you to play football or any other game until you show that you mean business. If that doesn't bring you

around I shall take you out of school. Fair warning, Steve."

Steve knew his father well enough to be certain that he would do just as he threatened, and the future looked particularly dark to him that day. Of course, if he had plenty of time he could master his Latin—and his Greek, which was troubling him less but was by no means a favourite course—as well as any other study, he told himself. But there was so much to be done! And try as he might, he could never seem to find time enough for study. If he gave up football it would, perhaps, be easy enough, but, he asked himself bitterly, what was the good of going to school and doing nothing but study? What was the good of knowing how to play football if he wasn't to have a chance to use his knowledge? It was all the fault of the faculty. It tried to get too much work out of the fellows in too short a time. But these reflections didn't help his case any. It was up to him to make good with Latin. Otherwise his father would write to Josh, as he threatened, and there'd be no more football. If he could get through the next month, by which time the football season would be at an end, it would be all right. After that he could give more time to lessons. He might, too, he told himself, give up those swim-

ming lessons. But they came at an hour when it was terribly hard to get a fellow's mind down to study. And, besides, he enjoyed those lessons. The only thing to do was to stay at home in the evenings and keep his nose in his books. Tom didn't have much trouble, he reflected, and why should he? Sometimes he got thoroughly angry with Tom for the ease with which that youth mastered lessons!

To make matters worse, just at that time, there was due the last of the week an original composition in French, designed by Mr. Daley as a test for the class. French did not bother Steve much, although this was partly due to the fact that Mr. Daley had been very lenient with him, knowing that he was having trouble in the classical courses. But writing an original composition in French was a feat that filled Steve with dismay. What the dickens was he to write about? Mr. Daley had announced that the composition must contain not less than twelve hundred words. That approximated six pages in a blue-book. Steve sighed, frowned, shook his head and finally shrugged his shoulders. After all, there was no use worrying about that yet. There still remained three days for the composition, and the most important thing now was to make a showing

in Latin. French could wait. If he didn't find time for the composition—well, Mr. Daley was easy! He'd get by somehow!

So Steve pegged away hard at his Latin for several days and made a very good showing, and Mr. Simkins, who had been contemplating harsh measures, took heart and hoped that further reports to the principal would be unnecessary. But what with Latin and Greek and mathematics and history and English, that French composition was still unwritten when Thursday evening arrived. It had been a hard day on the gridiron and Steve was pretty well fagged out when study hour came. He had told himself for several days that at the last moment he would buckle down and do that composition, but to-night, with a hard lesson in geometry staring him in the face, the thing looked impossible. Across the study table, Tom was diligently digging into Greek, his French composition already finished and ready to be handed in on the morrow. Steve looked over at him enviously and sighed. He hadn't an idea in his head for that composition! After a while, when he had spoiled two good sheets of paper with meaningless scrawls, he pushed back his chair. There was just one course open. He would go down and tell Mr. Daley that he couldn't do it! After all, "Hor-

ace '' was a pretty reasonable sort of chap and would probably give him another day or two. In any case, it was impossible to do the thing tonight. He glanced at his watch and found that the time was ten minutes to eight. Tom looked up inquiringly as Steve's chair went back.

'' I'm going down to see ' Horace,' '' said Steve. '' I can't do that French composition, and I'm going to tell him so. If he doesn't like it, he may do the other thing.''

Tom made no reply, but he watched his chum thoughtfully until the door had closed behind him. Then he dug frowningly for a moment with the nib of a pen in the blotter and finally shook his head and went back to his book.

When Steve was half-way between the stairwell and Mr. Daley's door, the latter opened and Eric Sawyer came out. Steve was in no mood tonight to pick a quarrel and he passed the older fellow with averted eyes, dimly aware of the scowl that greeted him. When he knocked at the instructor's door there was no reply and, after a moment, Steve turned the knob and entered. At the outer door Eric had paused and looked back.

Mr. Daley's study was lighted but empty. Satisfying himself on the latter point, Steve turned

to go out. Then, reflecting that, since the instructor had left the lights on, he was probably coming right back, he decided to await him. He seated himself in a chair near the big green-topped table. Almost under his hand lay a blue-book, and in idle curiosity Steve leaned forward and looked at it. On the white label in the upper left-hand corner he read: "French IV. Carl W. Upton. Original composition." Steve viewed that blue-book frowningly, envying Upton deeply. Upton, whom he knew by sight, was the sort of fellow who always had his lessons and who was forever being held up by the instructor to the rest of the course as a shining example of diligence. He roomed on the floor above Steve. It was, Steve reflected, just like Upton to get his composition done and hand it in in advance of the others. He wondered what sort of stuff Upton had written, and lifted the blue-book from the table.

"En Revanche!" he read as he turned to the first page. His lip curled. That was a silly title. He dipped into the story. It was something about a French soldier accused of cowardice by an officer. Steve, puzzling through the first page, grudgingly acknowledged that Upton had written pretty good stuff. But his interest soon waned, for some of the words were beyond him, and he

idly tossed the book back on the table. He wished, though, that that was his composition and not Upton's. He wondered if Mr. Daley had seen it. Somehow the position of the book, in the geometrical centre of the big writing-pad, suggested that Upton had found the instructor out and had left the book. If he had that book upstairs it wouldn't be hard to copy the composition out in his own hand-writing. It would be a whole lot like stealing, but——

Steve looked fascinatedly at the book for a minute. Then his hand went out and he was once more turning the pages of neat, close writing. Of course, he wouldn't really do a thing like that, but—well, it would solve a mighty big problem! And what a hole that self-sufficient Upton would be in! He couldn't prove that he had left the book in Mr. Daley's study, at least not unless the instructor had seen it there; and somehow Steve was pretty sure he hadn't. Of course a decent chap wouldn't do a trick like that, only—well, it would certainly be easy enough!

Upstairs, Tom was still deep in his Greek, but he looked up as Steve came in. "Find him?" he asked.

Steve shook his head. "No, he was out. I—I'll go down again." Instead of reseating him-

self at the table, he fidgetted aimlessly about the room, looked out the window, sat down on the seat, got up again, went to the closet, returned to the table and stood looking down on Tom with a frown. Tom closed his book with a sigh of relief and met his chum's gaze.

"Going to tackle that composition now?" he asked encouragingly.

"I guess so," answered Steve carelessly. "Are you through?"

"Yes. I think I'll run over to Harry's a minute. I suppose you won't come."

"Not likely, with this pesky thing to do." Steve sank into his chair, picked up a pencil and drummed irritably on the table. "Maybe, though," he went on after a moment, "I'll get up early and do it. I don't feel much like it to-night."

"Just the same," returned Tom as he picked up his cap, "I'd do it to-night if I were you and get it over with."

"Oh, if you were me you'd had it done a week ago Tuesday," replied Steve with vast sarcasm. "I guess I'll go along."

"How about your math?" asked Tom doubtfully.

Steve shrugged. "I'll get by," he answered.

"Anyway, I don't intend to stay cooped up here all the evening. I'll have a go at it when I get back, maybe."

"We-ell." Tom looked as though he wanted to advise against that course, but he didn't. Instead, "Do you mind waiting for me a minute?" he asked. "I want to run down and ask Mr. Daley about something, if he's back. Do you want to see him if he's there? I'll whistle up to you if you like."

Steve shook his head indifferently. "I'll see him when we come back," he answered. "Hurry up."

Tom was back in two or three minutes. "Still out," he announced as he put back on the table the French book he had taken with him. "He's getting a bit dissipated, I'm afraid, staying out after eight!"

"There's a faculty meeting to-night, I think," responded Steve. "Are you ready?"

He found his cap and followed Tom. In the corridor the latter glanced back. "Better turn out the light," he said. "They've been after the fellows lately about leaving it burning."

Grumblingly Steve stepped back and snapped the switch. "Who's monitor here, anyhow?" he asked.

"Upton," answered Tom. "And they say he's right on his job, too."

"He would be," growled the other. "He's a regular teacher's pet." As they went down the stairs Steve said: "I came across Eric Sawyer in the hall when I went down to find 'Horace'."

"Really?" asked Tom. "Did he—say anything?"

"No. I didn't want any trouble with him tonight and so I made believe I didn't see him."

"That's the stuff," Tom approved. "I guess if we leave him alone he won't bother us."

"I'm likely to bother him before I get through with him," replied Steve darkly as they left the building. "He can't shove me around as he did and get away with it!"

"Oh, come, Steve!" expostulated Tom patiently. "You know very well you shoved him first. What's the use of being sore about that?"

"He bumped into me," denied Steve. "I didn't shove."

"Well, you gave a mighty good imitation of it," replied Tom drily. "Seems to me it was about an even thing, and I'd forget it, Steve."

"Maybe you would," muttered Steve, "but I don't intend to."

CHAPTER XVII

THE BLUE-BOOK

It was almost half-past nine when they got back to the room. An hour in the society of Roy and Harry had done wonders for Steve's spirits, and on the way upstairs he cheerfully announced that he intended to tackle that geometry before he went to bed. As Tom switched the light on, Steve's glance encountered a piece of paper on the floor. It had evidently been slipped in under the door.

"Who's this from?" he muttered as he bore it to the table. "Someone was too lazy to open the door and come in."

"What is it?" asked Tom, bending over Steve's shoulder.

"It's from that idiot Durkin," chuckled the latter. "'Got just what you fellows need. Shoe-blacking stand, two brushes, all complete. Cheap. Come and see it. P. Durkin.'"

"A shoe-blacking stand!" laughed Tom. "Say, he must have seen your shoes, Steve."

"Must have seen yours, you mean!" Steve crumpled the note up and dropped it in the basket

under the table. "I guess we don't want any more of Mr. Durkin's bargains."

"Still, this 'Morris' chair turned out pretty well," said Tom, settling himself in it with a book. "And perhaps if we had that thing you'd keep your shoes looking better."

"Well, there's one thing about my shoes," returned Steve good-naturedly, "and that is the heels are blacked. Which is more than you can say of yours, my smart young friend."

Tom was about to deny the imputation when footsteps sounded in the corridor and there came a knock on the door.

"Come in," said Tom very politely. That step could only be Mr. Daley's, he thought. And when the door opened he found his surmise correct. Mr. Daley looked more nervous and embarrassed than usual as he entered.

"Good-evening, boys," he said. "I—er—I wonder if I might speak to you just a moment, Edwards."

"Certainly, sir."

"I'll get out, Mr. Daley," said Tom, rising.

"Er—well, if you don't mind, Hall; just for a minute. Thank you so much."

Tom went out, closing the door behind him, and Mr. Daley cleared his throat.

"Will you sit down, sir?" asked Steve.

"Er—thanks, yes, just for a minute. I—er—I believe you called this evening when I was out, Edwards."

"Yes, sir, about eight."

"Yes, yes. Sorry I was not in. I wonder if—if you happened to see a blue-book on my table when you were there, Edwards."

"Yes, sir, there was one there," replied Steve after an instant's hesitation.

"Ah, then Upton was not mistaken. He says he left one. Unfortunately, I am not able to find it, Edwards. You—er—you don't happen to know where it is, Edwards?"

"I, sir?" Steve's tone was incredulous. "Why, no, Mr. Daley. It was on the table when I left, and——"

"Er—just a moment!" Mr. Daley held up a hand, smiling nervously. "I don't mean to suggest that you carried the book off intentionally, Edwards, but it occurred to me that possibly you might have—er—taken it up by mistake, absent-mindedly, so to say, and—er—brought it up here with you."

"No, sir, I didn't." Steve looked at the instructor questioningly. "I don't see why you'd imagine that, sir, either."

"Er—well, I knew—that is, someone told me that you were in my room, Edwards, and I thought—that possibly—quite by accident—you had—er——"

"I was in your room, Mr. Daley, and I waited two or three minutes for you; maybe longer; and the blue-book was on the table when I went in and it was there when I came out."

"You—you had a blue-book in your hand, however, did you not, when you—er—left?"

"A blue-book? No, sir."

"Oh! That is strange, Edwards. You are certain you didn't take down a blue-book of your own and bring it back again?"

"Absolutely sure, sir."

"But—er—someone saw you leave my room, Edwards, with a blue-book in your hand."

Steve flushed and his voice held an angry tremor as he answered: "Someone was mistaken, Mr. Daley, whoever he was. Seems to me, sir, if the book is missing, you'd better ask that 'someone' about it."

"Um; yes; maybe." Mr. Daley blinked embarrassedly. "I—er—I thought that perhaps you had brought down your French composition and had possibly, in leaving, taken up Upton's book with your own by mistake. You—

er—you're quite sure that didn't happen, Edwards? ''

'' I'm positive, because I haven't done my composition, sir. ''

'' Haven't done it? ''

'' No, sir,'' replied Steve a trifle defiantly.

'' But—er—it's pretty late, and you know they are to be handed in to-morrow, Edwards. You are having trouble with it? ''

'' I—I haven't started it yet. I—I just can't do it, Mr. Daley. I never could do original things like that. That's why I went down to see you. I wanted to ask if you'd let me have a couple more days for it. You see, sir, I've been having a pretty hard time with Latin, and—and there hasn't been any time for the composition, sir.''

'' I see.'' Mr. Daley viewed Steve dubiously. '' I'm sorry, Edwards. I'm afraid you are not—er—trying very hard to accomplish your work these days.''

'' I am trying, sir, but—but the Latin—'' Steve hesitated. '' Mr. Simkins is awfully hard on me, Mr. Daley, and——''

'' And I am not? '' Mr. Daley smiled sadly. '' And so you thought you'd trust to my—er—good-nature, eh? Really, Edwards, you are asking a good deal, you know. You've had nearly

ten days for that composition; a scant twelve hundred words on any subject you liked; and it seems to me that if you had really wanted to do it you could have found the time. I don't want to be hard on you, but—er—I'm afraid I shall have to insist on your handing in that composition not later than to-morrow noon. I have been very lenient with you, Edwards, very. You—er—you must see that yourself. But—er—this sort of thing can't go on all the term. You really must get down to work."

"If I could have another day for it," begged Steve, "I could get it done, sir."

"You have had ten days already; to be exact, nine and a half, Edwards. I don't think I should make any exception in your case. I'm sorry."

Steve stared at his shoes, a somewhat mutinous expression on his face. After a moment, "It isn't fair to say I'm not trying," he broke out. "I *am* trying, but things are too hard here. They ask too much work of a fellow. Why, if I was to get B's in all my courses I'd have to study eight hours a day! A fellow wants to do something beside stick in his room and grind, Mr. Daley. He wants to get out and—and play sometimes. If you're on the football team you don't have any

time in the afternoons and then, when evening comes, you're tired and sleepy."

"But you have time between recitations in the morning, Edwards, to do some studying, do you not? Other boys manage to both work and play. Why can't you? Look at your room-mate. I believe that he is—er—on one of the football teams. He seems to get his lessons fairly well. I presume that he has written his composition?"

"Yes, sir."

"Of course. It is probably here somewhere." Mr. Daley's eyes inspected the pile of books at his elbow, and the corner of a blue-book met his gaze. "This is doubtless it." He drew it forth. "It doesn't look such a herculean task, Edwards. Here are seven pages, rather more than required, I'd say, and——"

Mr. Daley ceased abruptly, and, after a moment, Steve, who had been gloomily regarding the floor, looked across. The instructor was observing him strangely.

"Do you know whose book this is, Edwards?" he asked.

"I suppose it's Tom's. It isn't mine," he added moodily.

"It is Carl Upton's."

"Carl——" Steve stared bewilderedly.

"It seems that you must have—er—taken it after all, Edwards."

"But I didn't, sir! Tom will tell you that——"

He faltered, and a puzzled look came into his eyes as he regarded the book in the instructor's hand.

"Well, really, Edwards,"—Mr. Daley spoke lightly, but his countenance was grave—"you mustn't expect me to put it down to a miracle. If you didn't put the book here on your table, who did? Unless Hall knows something about it? Was he in my study this evening?"

There was a bare instant of hesitation. Then, "No, sir," replied Steve steadily.

"Er—you are sure? He might have called on me when you were out."

"We were together all the evening, Mr. Daley."

"Then——" The instructor cleared his throat nervously.

"I guess—I guess it's up to me, sir," said Steve.

Mr. Daley sighed. "I think it must be." There was silence for a moment. Then, "Why?" asked Mr. Daley gently.

"I don't know, sir."

"You couldn't have thought of—er—making unfair use of it?"

"I——" Steve hesitated again. Finally, "Perhaps I did for a moment. But—I shouldn't have, sir," he added earnestly.

"I hope not, Edwards. But—why did you take it? You—er—must have known that it would—er—be missed."

"I"—Steve seemed to be searching for an answer—"I just took it to—to get even with Upton."

"To get even with him? He has—er—done something, then, to—er—annoy you?"

"Yes, sir. That is, well—I don't like him."

Mr. Daley observed Steve dubiously. At last, "I wish I could believe that explanation, Edwards," he said. "As inexcusable as such—er—such an action would be, it would still be preferable to—to what I am forced to suspect. But the whole thing is beyond me." The instructor spread his hands in a gesture of despair. "I can't understand it, Edwards." After a minute, "It must have been an accident," continued Mr. Daley almost pleadingly. "You—er—you perhaps mistook the book for your own——"

"I didn't have any," muttered Steve.

"Well." Mr. Daley cleared his throat. "I—I must think it over. I—I scarcely know what to say, Edwards. I'm sorry, very sorry." He

arose and moved to the door. "Come and see me to-morrow noon, please. We—er—must talk this over again. Good-night, Edwards."

"Good-night, sir." Steve stood up until the door had closed and then sank back into his chair again, a very miserable look on his face.

"What a crazy place to hide it!" he murmured.

The door opened and Tom came in, Tom with an expression half troubled and half humorous. "What's up?" he asked in a low voice.

"Oh, nothing," replied Steve carelessly, avoiding Tom's eyes. "He jumped me because I hadn't done my comp. Says I must turn it in by noon to-morrow."

"Is that all?" Tom heaved a sigh of relief. "When he asked me to get out I thought it was something pretty serious."

"Isn't that old composition serious enough?" asked Steve with a laugh that didn't sound quite true.

"Yes, I suppose so. Look here, Steve, if you'll tackle it now, I'll help you all I can with it. It won't take long. What time is it?"

"Have you done yours?" asked Steve.

"Yes," replied the other unenthusiastically. "It's done, but—but I guess it's pretty rotten. If I get a C on it I'll be doing well. I thought

maybe I'd go over it again, but—I guess it'll have to do."

"Where is it?"

"Here somewhere." Tom searched at the far end of the table and drew a blue-book to light. "Want to see it?"

Steve took it and glanced over it, a puzzled frown on his forehead.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom. "Don't you like it? I guess it is pretty punk, though."

"It's all right, as far as I know," answered Steve, returning the book. "Only—I don't understand——"

"Don't understand what? Say, you're as mysterious as—as—Sherlock Holmes!"

"Nothing. By the way, a funny thing happened." Steve wandered toward the window, his back to Tom. "When I went down to find 'Horace' I picked up a blue-book that was on his table and brought it up here. It was Upton's. I—I hadn't any recollection of doing it, but he found it lying on the table. Of course I felt like a fool."

"Oh," said Tom after a moment. "That—that was funny. I didn't see you bring it in with you." There was a note of constraint in his voice that did not escape Steve.

"I don't remember bringing it in," he replied.

"I saw it on the table down there and—and looked at it, had it in my hand, but I don't remember bringing it up."

"Funny," said Tom lightly. "Did—did he say anything?"

"Oh, no. Of course I denied it at first, said I couldn't have taken it, but he said I must have, unless—unless you had. He asked if you were in his room and I said no."

"But I was!" exclaimed Tom. "Don't you remember? I went down just before we went out. But there wasn't any blue-book on his table then. At least, I didn't see any."

"Well, it doesn't matter. I told him you hadn't been there. I—I'd let him think so, anyway. There's no use having any more bother about the old thing."

"Well, but—you're sure he wasn't waxy? Of course I didn't take the book; you can prove that I didn't have it when I came back; but if he's acting ugly about it, why—I'll tell him I was in there too. He can lay it on me if he wants to. I—I think I'll tell him, Steve."

"You keep out of it," answered Steve roughly. "What's the use of having any more talk about it? He's got the book and there's no harm done."

Tom considered a moment. Then, "You're certain?" he asked.

"Certain of what?"

"That—that it's all right, that he doesn't blame you for it."

"Oh, he knows I did it, but he doesn't mind. What time is it?"

"A quarter past ten. What are you doing?"

Steve was ripping his bed to pieces. "I want a couple of blankets," he said. "Haven't we some thumb-tacks somewhere?"

"Table drawer," replied Tom. "What's the game?"

"I'm going to do that rotten composition." Steve climbed to a chair, and with the aid of push-pins draped one of the blankets over the door and transom. Then he pulled the window-shade close and hung the second blanket inside the casement. "There! Now if anyone sees a light in this room they'll have to have mighty good eyes. You tumble into bed, Tom, and try to imagine it's dark."

"Bed? Who wants to go to bed?" asked Tom, smothering a yawn. "I'm going to help you with it."

"No, you're not," replied Steve doggedly. "I'm going to do it and I'm going to do it all myself if it takes me until daylight. Now shut up."

CHAPTER XVIII

B PLUS AND D MINUS

At half-past ten the next morning Mr. Daley hurried into the class-room where French IV was already assembled, stumbled over the edge of the platform—the boys would have gasped with amazement had he neglected to do that—and took his seat. On one corner of the table in front of him was a pile of blue-books. He drew it toward him and ran a hand along the edges of the books.

"Has everyone handed in his composition?" he asked.

There was no reply and he seemed surprised. "I—er—I am to understand, then, that you have all turned your books in?"

Still no dissenting voice. Mr. Daley's gaze travelled over the class until it encountered Steve at the rear of the room. He opened his mouth, hesitated, closed it again, cleared his throat and finally pushed the pile of books aside.

"Very well," he said. "I shall mark these

this evening. You will—er—kindly get them tomorrow. Now then, ' Le Siege de Paris '; we left off where, Upton? "

At a few minutes past twelve Steve knocked at Mr. Daley's door, and, obeying the invitation, entered. The instructor was seated at his desk, a litter of blue-books in front of him and a pipe in his mouth. The latter he laid aside as the boy appeared.

" You said you wanted to see me, sir," said Steve.

" Er—yes, Edwards. Sit down, please." The instructor took up his pipe again, hurriedly put it aside, seized a pencil and jotted nervously on the back of a book. Finally,

" I—er—find your composition here," he said. " When did you write it? "

" Between half-past ten last night and two o'clock this morning."

" Hm! " Mr. Daley swung around in his chair, viewed the oblong of landscape framed by the window for a moment and swung back again. There was a faint smile about his eyes. " Edwards, you—er—are a bit disconcerting. I presume you know that the rules require you to be in bed with lights out at ten-thirty? "

" Yes, sir."

"Hm! And you—er—deliberately transgressed that rule?"

"I didn't see anything else to do, Mr. Daley. You said I must turn that in by noon and there wouldn't have been time this morning to do it."

"Logically reasoned, my boy, but——" The instructor shook his head. "You mustn't expect me to compliment you on your performance, Edwards. To perform one duty by neglecting another is hardly—er—commendable. If it were not that you had transgressed a rule of the school, Edwards, I might compliment you quite highly. Your composition—I—er—I've been glancing through it—is really very good. I don't mean that you have not made mistakes of grammar, for you have, lots of them, but—er—you have written a well-constructed and—er—well-expressed narrative. What I—er—especially like about it is the subject. You have written of something you know about, something close at home, so to say. I—er—I am not much of a swimmer myself, but I presume that the instructions you have laid down here are—er—quite correct. In fact, Edwards, I'll even go so far as to say that I fancy one might take this composition of yours and—er—really learn something about swimming. And—er—if

you have ever tried to learn anything of the sort —golf, rowing, tennis—from a hand-book you will realise that that is high praise."

"Yes, sir. Thank you."

"I had decided to mark your composition with a B, Edwards. Perhaps the many mistakes in grammar would ordinarily indicate a C, perhaps even a C minus, but the—er—other merits of the exercise are so pronounced that, on the whole, I think it deserves a B."

"Thank you, sir."

"Er—just a moment." The instructor held up a hand. "I said that I had decided to give you a B, Edwards. That, however, was before I had learned when this was written. I shall now give it a D minus. You—er—you understand why, Edwards?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'm sorry, but I—er—must take into consideration the facts in the case. And those facts are that you neglected your work until the last moment and then disobeyed one of the well-known rules of the school in order to perform it. There is one other thing I might do. I might credit you with a B on your exercise and report you to the Office for disobeying the rules. But—er—I think, on the whole, that the first method is the

more satisfactory. You understand, of course, that anything under a C in this test is equivalent to failure? ''

'' Yes, sir.''

'' Hm; exactly. Therefore, Edwards, you will be required to make up nearly a month's work in French. I shall have to ask you to prove to me that you are in line with the rest of the class. But you will have a full week to do this and I—er —I suspect that you will not find it very difficult.'' Mr. Daley took up a blue pencil and marked a large '' D— '' on the corner of the blue-book. '' You might as well take this now, Edwards. Bring me another composition not later than a week from to-day, please.'' The instructor fluttered the leaves of a memorandum-pad and made a note opposite a future date. '' I have not corrected it, but, as you have it to do over, that is not necessary.''

Mr. Daley leaned back in his chair and gazed for a minute at the table. Then,

'' There is one other thing, Edwards,'' he said hesitantly. '' About last night, you know; the—er—the misappropriation of Upton's blue-book. Have you—er—thought that over? ''

'' I suppose so, sir.''

'' Hm! I should like to ask you one question

and receive an absolutely truthful reply, Edwards."

"Yes, sir."

"When you took that book to your room did you intend to—er—make a wrong use of it?"

"No, sir. I saw the book on your table, Mr. Daley, and—and it did occur to me that it would be easy to copy it out in my own writing and—and turn it in as my work, sir. I read a little of it and put it back on the table. But I don't at all remember seeing it again after that, sir, and that's the truth. I haven't the slightest recollection of having it in my hand when I left this room or of putting it on the table upstairs. And—and I'd like you to believe me, sir."

"I want to, Edwards, I want to," replied Mr. Daley eagerly. "And—er—to-day your story sounds much more plausible. I can imagine that, with the thought of your own composition in mind and doubtless worrying you, you might easily have—er—absentmindedly picked that book from the table here when you went out and taken it to your room without being conscious of the act. I believe that to be quite possible, Edwards, and I am going to think it happened just that way. I have never observed any signs of—er—dishonesty in you, my boy, and I don't think you are a liar.

We will consider that matter closed and we will both forget all about it."

"Thank you, sir," replied Steve gratefully.

"But, Edwards, this seems to me a good time to tell you that—er—that your attitude toward—er—your work and toward those in authority has not been satisfactory. You have—er—impressed me as a boy with, to use a vulgar expression, a grouch. Now, get that out of your system, Edwards. No one is trying to impose on you. Your work is no harder than the next fellow's. What you lack is, I presume, application. I—er—I don't deny that possibly you are pressed for time when it comes to studying, but that is your fault. Your football work is exacting, for one thing, although there are plenty of fellows—I could name twenty or thirty with whom I come in contact—who manage to play football and maintain an excellent class standing at the same time. So, Edwards, the fault lies somewhere with you, *in* you, doubtless. Now, what do you think it is?"

"I don't know, Mr. Daley." Steve shook his head hopelessly. "I want to do what's right, sir, but—but somehow I can't seem to."

"When you study do you put your mind on it, or do you find yourself thinking of other things, football, for instance?"

"I guess I think of other things a good deal," replied Steve.

"Football?"

"I guess so; football and—and swimming and —lots of things, sir."

"There's a time for football and a time for study, Edwards. You will have to first of all—er—leave football behind you when you come off the field. Swimming, the same way. It won't work. I've seen it tried too often, Edwards. You—er—you wouldn't want to have to give up football, I suppose?"

"No, sir!" Steve looked up in alarm.

"But it might come to that, my boy. You're here to learn, you know, and we would not be treating your parents fairly—or you either—if we allowed you to waste your time. Football is an excellent sport; one of the best, I think; but it's only a sport, not a—er—profession, you know. All the knowledge of football in the world isn't going to help you when you leave here and try to enter college. By the way, I presume you intend to go to college, Edwards?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then keep that in mind. Remember that you're getting yourself ready for it. Perhaps that will make your work seem better worth

doing. How are you getting on with your Latin?"

"Very well, sir, just now."

"Better see that 'just now' becomes 'all the time,' Edwards. Why, look here! You can do the work set you and play football or baseball or anything else if you'll make up your mind to it. You're a bright, normal fellow, with the average amount of brains. Systematise, Edwards! Arrange your day right. Mark down so many hours for recitations, so many hours for study, so many hours for play, and stick to your schedule. You'll find after awhile that it comes easy. You'll find that you—er—you'll miss studying when anything keeps you from it. When you go out of here I want you to do that very thing, my boy. I want you to go right up to your room, take a sheet of paper and make out a daily schedule. And when you've got it done put it somewhere where you'll see it. And stick to it! Will you?"

"Yes, sir; that is, I—I'll do my best."

"Good!" Mr. Daley held out a hand, smiling. "Shake hands on it, Edwards. You may not believe it, but half of—er—doing a thing consists of making up your mind to it! Well, that's all, I think. Er—you'd better look me up this evening

and we'll settle about that French. Good-bye. Hope I haven't made you late for dinner."

Steve drew a deep breath outside the door, puckered his lips and whistled softly, but it was a thoughtful whistle; as thoughtful as it was tuneless, and it lasted him all the way upstairs and into his room. Tom had gone, evidently having wearied of waiting for his friend to accompany him to dinner. Steve's own appetite was calling pretty loudly, but, having slipped the blue-book out of sight under a pile on the table, he dropped into his chair, drew a sheet of paper to him and began on the schedule. It took him almost a half-hour to complete it, and he spoiled several sheets in the process, but it was finally done, and, heading it "Daley Schedule," with a brief smile at the pun, he placed it on his chiffonier and hurried across to Wendell.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SECOND PUTS IT OVER

"WHAT do you know about that?" demanded Tom the next day. "'Horace' gave me a B on my comp! Of course, I'm not kicking, but I'll bet he made a mistake. Maybe he got nervous and his pencil slipped!"

"Seems to me," returned Steve coldly, "he knows better than you do what the thing is worth. He's not exactly an idiot, you know."

Tom stared in some surprise. "I didn't say he was an idiot, did I? Considering the things you've said about 'Horace' I don't think you need take that high-and-mighty tone!"

"Well, don't be a chump, then," replied Steve. "If Mr. Daley gave you a B you deserved a B."

"Thanking you kindly," murmured Tom as he disappeared behind the pages of the blue-book to digest the corrections and criticisms on the margins. Steve's manner since the night he had remained up until morning to write that composition had been puzzling. He had very little to say to Tom, and when he did speak, spoke in a con-

strained manner quite unlike him. And more than once Tom had caught Steve observing him with an expression that he couldn't fathom. There was something up, that was certain, but what it was Tom couldn't imagine. It wasn't that Steve was cross or disagreeable. For that matter, his disposition seemed a good deal improved. But he was decidedly stand-offish and extraordinarily quiet. Tom wanted to ask outright what the trouble was, but, for some reason, he held back. As the days passed, Steve's manner became more natural and he ceased looking at Tom as though, to quote the latter's unspoken simile, he was a new sort of an animal in a zoo! But some constraint still remained, and, after awhile, Tom accepted the situation and grew accustomed to it. By that time he had grown too proud to ask for an explanation. The two chums spent less time together as a result, Steve becoming more dependent on Roy for companionship and Tom on Harry. When they were all four together, which was very frequently, it was not so bad, but when Steve and Tom were alone conversation was apt to languish.

Tom at first was inclined to blame Steve's "Daley Schedule" for the change, for that schedule had quite altered Steve's existence. He

lived by a strict routine which he followed with a dogged determination quite foreign to his ways as Tom knew them. He got up on time in the morning, reached the dining-hall almost as soon as the doors were opened, spent a scant twenty minutes there and then went directly back to his room to browse over his recitations for the day. Once Tom found him there hunched up in a corner of the window-seat while the chambermaid, viewing his presence distastefully, draped the furniture with bedding and did her best with broom and duster to discourage him from a repetition of the outrage. Between ten and eleven on three days a week Steve put in an hour of study in the room. On other days he managed to snatch two half-hour periods in the library between recitations. At six he was almost invariably awaiting the opening of the doors for dinner, and well before seven he was at his table again. Usually he studied until nine, although now and then he closed his books at half-past eight and followed Tom to Number 17 Torrence. Roy called him the Prize Grind and interestedly inquired what scholarship he was trying for. Steve accepted the joking with a grim smile.

It wasn't easy. For the first few days he had to drive himself to his work with bit and spur.

His feet lagged and he groaned in spirit—perhaps audibly, too—as he approached his books. But he did it, and little by little it became easier, until, as Mr. Daley had predicted, it had become a habit with him to do certain things at certain hours and he was uncomfortable if his routine was disarranged. I don't think Steve ever got where he loved to study, but he did eventually reach a pride of attainment that answered quite as well. He found as time went on that it was becoming easier to learn his lessons and easier to remember them when learned, and by that time he had taught himself to command over his thoughts, and when he was struggling through a proposition in geometry he wasn't wondering whether he would beat out Sherrard for the position of regular right end on the second before the season was over. In other words, he had learned concentration.

But all this was not yet. That first week, in especial, was hard sledding, and that French composition almost drove him to distraction and gave him brain fever before it was done. But done it was and on time, and, while the best that Mr. Daley would allow it was a C plus, Steve was distinctly proud of it. And in that week he demonstrated to the instructor's satisfaction that he was up with the class in French. I think Mr. Daley was very

willing to be convinced and that he met Steve quite half-way. Latin was still a bugaboo to Steve, but it, too, was getting easier. On the whole, that schedule, backed by a grim determination, was making good.

Meanwhile football pursued its relentless course. Every day the first and second fought it out for gradually increasing periods and every day the season grew nearer its close and the Claflin game, the final goal, loomed more distinct. Phillips School came and went and Brimfield marked up her fifth victory. Phillips gave the Maroon-and-Grey a hard tussle, and the score, 12 to 0, didn't indicate the closeness of the playing. For Brimfield made her first touchdown by the veriest fluke and only gained her second in the last few minutes of play, when Phillips, outlasted, weakened on her six-yard line and let Norton through. On the other hand, Phillips had the ball thrice inside Brimfield's twenty yards, missed a field-goal by the narrowest of margins and, with the slightest twist of the luck, might have proved the victor.

"Boots" had hammered the second into what Mr. Robey unhesitatingly declared to be one of the best scrub teams he had ever seen, and there was more than one contest between it and the 'varsity

that yielded nothing to an outside game for hard fighting and excitement. Steve and his rival, Sherrard, were running about even for the right end position. Steve's tackling had improved vastly under Marvin's tutoring, and it was his ability in that department that possibly gave him a shade the better of the argument with Sherrard. So far there had been no decided slump in the playing of either team, and, since a slump is always looked for at some time during the season, both Mr. Robey and Danny Moore were getting anxious. Danny almost begged the fellows to go stale a little. "It ain't natural," he declared. "It's got to come, so let it and have it over with." Neither had there been any injuries of moment. On this score Danny had no regrets, however. He was a good trainer and prided himself on his ability to condition his charges so that they would escape injuries.

Of course there had been plenty of bruises—one mild case of charley-horse, several dislocated or sprained fingers, a wrenched ankle or two and any number of cuts and scrapes, but none of the injuries had interfered with work for more than three or four days and not once had any first-string member of the 'varsity missed an outside game by reason of them. Steve's share of the in-

juries was a bruised shoulder sustained in a flying tackle that was more enthusiastic than scientific, and the thing bothered him for several days but did not keep him off the field. Tom, who played opposite Jay Fowler in scrimmage, was forever getting his countenance disfigured. Not that Fowler meant to leave his mark, but he was a big, powerful, hard-fighting chap and there were plenty of times when both parties to the practice games quite forgot that they were friends. Tom was seldom seen without a strip of court-plaster pasted to some portion of his face.

It was four days after the Phillips game, to be exact, on the following Wednesday, that the first and second got together for what turned out to be the warmest struggle of the season in civil combat. It was a cold, leaden day, with a stinging breeze out of the northeast, and every fellow who wore a head-guard felt as full of ginger as a young colt. The second trotted over from their gridiron at four and found the first on its toes to get at them. Things started off with a whoop. The second received the kick-off and Marvin ran the ball back forty yards through a broken field before he was nailed. Encouraged by that excellent beginning, the scrub team went at it hammer and tongs. There was a fine old hole that day be-

tween Sawyer and Williams, and the second's backs ploughed through for gain after gain before the opposing line was cemented together again there. By that time the ball was down near the 'varsity's ten yards and Captain Miller was frothing at the mouth, while the opposing coaches were hurling encouragement at their charges and the pandemonium even extended to the side-lines, where the school at large, in a frenzy of excitement, shouted and goaded on the teams.

Twice the first held, once forcing Harris back for a loss, and then Marvin called for kick formation and himself held the ball for Brownell. What happened then was one of those unforeseen incidents that make football the hair-raising game it is. There was a weak spot in the second's line and, with the passing of the ball to Marvin, the 'varsity forwards came rampaging through. Brownell swung his leg desperately, trusting to fortune to get the pigskin over the upstretched hands of the charging enemy, but it swung against empty air. Marvin, seeing what was bound to happen, fearing the result of a blocked kick, snatched the ball aside just as Captain Brownell swung at it, rolled over a couple of times out of the path of the oncoming opponents, scrambled to his feet and, somehow, scuttled past a half-dozen

defenders of the goal and fell over the line for a touchdown.

The 'varsity afterwards called it "bull-luck" and "fluke" and several other belittling names, but "Boots" said it was "quick thinking and football, by jiminy!" At all events the second scored and then leaped and shouted like a band of Comanche Indians—or any other kind of Indian if there's a noisier sort!—and generally "rubbed it in."

After that you may believe that the 'varsity played football! But nevertheless the first ten-minute period ended with the second still six points to the good and her goal-line intact. The teams were to play three periods that day and "Boots" ran four substitutes on the field when the next one began. One of them was Steve.

It is no light task to play opposite the 'varsity captain and not come off second best, but the concensus of opinion that evening was to the effect that Steve had done that very thing. The wintery nip had got into Steve's blood, I think, for he played like a tiger-cat on the defence, ran like a streak of wind and tackled so hard that Coach Robey had to caution him. Twice in that period the first came storming down to the second's twenty yards and twice they were held there.

Once Milton was nailed on a round-the-end run and once Still fumbled a pass and Freer fell on it.

Steve carried out his part of a forward-pass play with excellent precision later and seemingly had a clear field and a touchdown in sight for a moment. But Milton managed to upset him on the thirty yards, and the gain—Steve had negotiated four white lines before the 'varsity quarter got him—eventually went for naught, since Marvin fumbled a minute later and Sawyer squirmed through and captured the ball.

Neither side scorednor camevery near it in that period. Steve, who was having the time of his life, beamed joyously when the whistle, starting the third period, found him still in the line-up. He had feared that " Boots " would put Sherrard back. But Steve didn't realise the kind of a game he had been putting up. If he had he would have credited " Boots " with more sense. Tom, with two brand-new facial contusions to his credit, was relegated to the bench for the last round. Perhaps " Boots " thought it only fair to allow Gafferty some of the decorations that Fowler and others were handing out!

The first tried a kicking game in order to reach striking distance and, since she always had the better of the argument there, forced the second

slowly and very surely back past the middle of the field. Then Marvin, realising the futility of pitting Freer and himself against Norton and Williams and Milton, either one of whom could outpunt the second from five to ten yards, started a rushing game on his thirty-five yards, swinging Harris and Freer around the ends for small gains and himself taking the pigskin for a delayed plunge through centre that put the scrubs on their forty-five-yard line and gave them their first down of the period.

But the next three tries pulled in only six yards, and Freer punted. For once he had plenty of time and the oval travelled far down into the enemy's territory and was caught by Kendall, who took it back a scant five yards before Turner, the second's left end, got past the hastily-formed interference and upset him. The 'varsity made four through the left side of the line and got her first down on a fake kick that caught the second napping. She again secured her distance on three tries, and the lines faced each other near the middle of the field.

What happened then was never definitely explained. Whether Milton fumbled the pass from centre or whether Still missed the toss from Milton, history doesn't record. Not that it matters,

however. The fact is that the ball was suddenly seen to go rolling back up the field as though animated by a desperate desire to score a touchdown on its own hook. The 'varsity backs hit the line hard and went tumbling through, to the frenzied shouts of "Ball! Ball!" from Milton and the opponents. The latter, trying to get past the 'varsity and gain the bobbing pigskin, got so inextricably mixed up with the enemy that the ball went on rolling around, under the pranks of the helpful wind, for a heart-breaking length of time. Then, as it seemed, every fellow on the field started for it at once!

Steve had made a wild attempt to get through inside of Andy Miller, but Miller had sent him sprawling, and when he got to his feet again he was one of the last in the mad rush. How it happened that Eric Sawyer, not overly fast on his feet, reached the pigskin first, or, at least, finally, is a mystery. But it was Eric who at length plunged out of the confusion, ball in arm, shook off three or four tacklers and started hot-footed toward the distant goal. By some unusual burst of speed he not only got a clear start of the rest, but shot past Steve before that youth could intercept him. Marvin had followed the others toward the 'varsity's goal and now between Eric and the

final white lines, some forty-five yards distant, lay a clear field. And Eric, spurred on by the knowledge that here was perhaps the one chance of his lifetime to make a spectacular run for half the length of the gridiron and score a touchdown, worked his sturdy legs as they had probably never been worked before!

But he was not to go unchallenged. The enemy was hot on his track, Steve in the lead. And with the enemy, doing their best to upset or divert the pursuit, came a half-dozen of the 'varsity. It was a wildly confused race for a minute. Then the slow-footed ones dropped behind and the procession consisted of Eric, running desperately some five yards ahead of Steve, Steve pounding along at his heels, Williams striving to edge Freer toward the side of the field, Marvin leading Captain Miller by a scant yard, and one or two others dropping gradually away as the race progressed. Near the twenty-five-yard line Williams managed to upset Freer and went down with him in the effort, Andy Miller drew even with Marvin, and Eric glanced behind him for the first time, at the same moment heading a bit further toward the centre of the gridiron.

That move lost him a stride of his lead, and Steve made a final spurt that took just about all

the breath left in his body. On the fifteen yards his hand went out gropingly, touched Eric's back and fell away. Near the ten-yard line Steve launched himself forward and his arms settled about Eric's thighs, slid down to his knees and tightened. Eric went down, dragged forward another yard and then, panting and weak, gave it up. Then Marvin settled ungently on his back, to make assurances doubly sure, Andy Miller threw him off very promptly and Steve rolled over on his back and fought for breath.

The rest of the teams came panting up, the audience along the side-line howled and cheered gloriously, if a trifle breathlessly, having itself raced down the field in an effort to keep abreast of the drama, and delighted members of the second team lifted Steve to his tottering feet, thumped him on the back and shrieked praise into his singing ears.

After that, with the ball on the second's eight yards, the 'varsity should have scored easily. And yet, so gallantly did the scrubs dig their toes into the trampled turf that thrice the 'varsity was held for a scant gain and, finally, with one down remaining, Williams dropped back to the twenty-yard line and dropped a field-goal.

"Boots" was almost moved to tears and looked

as though he wanted to embrace each and every member of his team. For what was a puny three points when the second had six to its credit? The things that Miller said were extremely derogatory, while Coach Robey walked back to the middle of the field with a disapproving air. In the four minutes that remained, there was football played that *was* football! The 'varsity, smarting under impending defeat, went at it with a desperation that promised everything. That it failed of what it promised was only because the second, buoyed up by the knowledge of victory in its grasp, fought like veterans. There was some fierce playing during those two hundred and forty brief seconds, and the fellow who finally trudged off the field without a scar felt himself dishonoured. Substitutes were thrown into the fray by both sides, although "Boots," having fewer men to call on, was handicapped. Steve went out in favour of Sherrard soon after the kick-off, and Tom relieved Gafferty. The coaches raged and urged, the rival captains scolded and implored and the quarters danced around and acted like wild-men. And then, suddenly, the ball was seized, a whistle blew and it was all over. And the panting players, tense of face, dripping with perspiration, drew apart to view each other at first scowlingly and

then with slowly spreading grins, taking toll of their own injuries and the enemy's.

"Good work, second," said Mr. Robey. "That's all for to-day. Get your blankets and run all the way in."

CHAPTER XX

BLOWS ARE STRUCK

The second went off jubilantly. Steve was a hero for an hour. In the locker room "Boots" said some nice things to them, pointed out a few faults and took himself away just as the first team and its substitutes came piling in. Most of them looked pretty grim about the mouths. Evidently in the few minutes that Mr. Robey had detained them on the field, they had been provided with food for thought. Andy Miller encountered Steve on his way to the bath.

"That was good work, Edwards," he said heartily. "You fellows certainly put it over us to-day." He shook his head ruefully. "We ought to have got that touchdown in the last period." Then he smiled grimly, and, "We'll get you to-morrow, though," he said with conviction. "How's everything with you?"

"Fine and dandy, thanks," replied Steve heartily.

"Good! You haven't been around to see me,

by the way. You and Hall must think a confidence-man isn't a proper acquaintance."

"We're coming around soon, Miller. The fact is, I—well, I made such a mutt of myself that last time——"

"Oh, nonsense! That's all right, Edwards. Don't let that worry you. Besides, you took my advice, I guess, and that squares it. Mind if I give you some more, by the way?"

"Of course not! I wish you would."

"Only this, Edwards. On defence don't watch the ball. They'll tell you to, but don't do it. Watch your opponent. Watch his eyes. He will tell you when the ball's snapped. He's got to watch it and you haven't, and then if you keep your eyes on him you can guess where he's coming almost before he starts. It may sound cheeky for me to tell you this, because, as a matter of absolute fact, Edwards, you played all around me to-day— "

"Oh, piffle, Miller!"

"Yes, you did," insisted the captain grimly. "I know it, if you don't. But you try what I tell you to-morrow and see what a jump you'll get on the other fellow. Come around and see me soon, you and Hall."

Andy moved away and Steve hurried on to find

a shower before the new crowd claimed them all. He was pretty well fagged out this afternoon, and for once the thought of that swimming class didn't appeal. But after a tepid shower and then a hard rush of ice-cold water over his tired body, he felt different. Coming out of the bath he almost collided with Eric Sawyer. Eric had a nasty cut over his right eye that gave him a peculiarly ugly expression, and it was soon evident that Eric's temper was as ugly as his appearance.

"Hello, fresh," he growled, scowling at Steve and barring his way in the narrow passage. "What call had you to butt in on me to-day?"

"I was playing the game, that's all," replied Steve coolly.

"You think you're a wonder, don't you? Well, you wouldn't have got me if I hadn't slipped. And the next time you interfere with me on the field or anywhere else I'll fix you for keeps. Now you mind that, you fresh young kid."

"You're a wonder at making threats, Sawyer," returned Steve angrily. "Why don't you do something besides talk?"

"I'd give you a good thrashing if you weren't so small," Eric growled.

"Oh, that's all right," replied Steve airily. "We can't all have piano legs, you know."

"Say, you let my legs alone! For two cents I'd tell what I know about you, you cheater, and we'd see how long you'd stay so cocky!"

"What you know about me?" laughed Steve. "You go right ahead and tell anything you want to, Sawyer. Whatever it is, it's a lie, I guess."

"Oh, is it? It's a lie that you swiped Upton's blue-book with his composition in it, I suppose. It's a lie that you were going to use it until Daley went up to your room and found it, I dare say. It's——"

"Yes, it is a lie, and you know it, Sawyer," flamed Steve. "If you tell any story like that around——"

"I'll tell what I please, kid, and you can't stop me." Several fellows came along the passage, viewing the two curiously, and Eric dropped his voice a note. "You stop bothering me, Edwards, or I will tell, and if I do, this place will be too hot for you. We don't like cheaters here——"

Steve sprang at him madly, but Eric stepped aside and Steve's blow went past.

"None of that!" warned Eric in a low, ugly voice. "Ah, you want it, do you?"

Steve hit again and Eric countered and got in a blow on the younger boy's neck that sent him

staggering against the wall. Then arms wrapped themselves around Steve and a voice said:

"Here, what's up, Eric? Cut it out, Edwards!"

Steve, struggling, found himself in the firm grasp of Innes, the big first team centre-rush. "He called me a cheat!" he cried angrily. "You let me go, Innes!"

"So he is a cheat," returned Eric contemptuously. "He swiped Carl Upton's French composition and was going to hand it in as his own if Daley hadn't caught him at it!"

"That's a lie!" cried Steve. "Ask Mr. Daley himself! You're saying it because I kept you from making that touchdown, you—you——"

"Hold on, Edwards!" said Innes. "Don't call names." By this time the passage had filled with fellows, among them Andy Miller. Miller pushed forward.

"What's up, Jack?" he asked of the centre. Innes shrugged his big shoulders.

"Oh, just a scrap. Run along, you fellows. It's all over."

"It isn't over!" declared Steve, still trying to detach himself from the big fellow's grasp. "He's got to take it back! He's got to take it back or fight!"

"Cut it out, Edwards!" said Miller sternly. "Don't act like a kid. What's the trouble, Eric, anyway?"

"Oh, this kid got fresh with me," replied Eric with a malevolent glare at Steve. "Said I had piano legs——" There was an audible snicker from some of the audience—"and I told him to shut up and he made a swipe at me and I shoved him away. That's all."

"He said I cheated!" raged Steve.

"So you did. You stole Upton's French comp. out of Daley's room and he found it on your table."

"That's a lie! I don't know how that book got there. Mr. Daley will tell you——"

"Cut it, Edwards! I saw you carry the book out of the room myself! Now what do you say?"

"I say you lie! I say——"

"Stop that, Edwards!" Miller turned to Eric. "You've got no right to say things like that, Eric, and you know it. I don't believe he did anything of the sort. If he had, Mr. Daley would have had him expelled. Now you two fellows stop squabbling. You've been at it all the fall. If you don't, I'll see that you both lose your positions. And that goes!"

"Then tell him to let me alone," replied Eric with a shrug.

"Oh, forget it, Sawyer," exclaimed a voice down the passage. "You're twice as big as he is. Let the kid alone."

"Sure, I'll let him alone," growled Eric with an angry glare in the direction of the speaker. "Only he's got to stop getting fresh with me. I've warned him half-a-dozen times."

"And you'll have to warn me half-a-dozen more times," responded Steve grimly, "if you think I'm going to stand around and be called names. If I were as big as you are, you wouldn't dare——"

"That'll be about all from both of you," said Andy Miller. "Now beat it. If I hear of any more trouble from either of you while the season lasts, I'll have you both out of the game in a wink. If you've got to row, do it after we've beaten Claflin. Move on now! Get off the corner, all of yez!" And Andy good-naturedly pushed the fellows before him down the passage. Innes released Steve, but stepped between him and Eric.

"Come on, Edwards," he said with a laugh. "Be good and get your clothes on. Cap will do just what he says he will, too. You take my advice, kid, and bury the hatchet."

Steve went back to his locker, and with trembling hands dressed himself. Harry Westcott and Tom joined him and asked in low voices about the trouble. But Steve was non-communicative. He was wondering how much of Eric Sawyer's charge the fellows who had heard it were believing. Finally,

"No swimming to-day?" asked Tom.

Steve shook his head. "No," he answered. "Tell the fellows, will you? I'm—I'm too tired. I'm sorry."

"It's pretty late, anyway," murmured Harry. Together the three crossed the room toward the door. Already, as it seemed to Steve, fellows were regarding him suspiciously. Eric was not in sight, having gone on to his bath, for which two at least of the trio were thankful. Harry left them at the corner of Torrence, and Steve and Tom went on in silence to their room. Somehow it seemed difficult nowadays for them to find things to talk about. Steve resolutely sat himself down and drew his books toward him, while Tom, after fidgetting around for a few minutes, announced that he was going over to the office to see if there was any mail, and went out again. Steve was glad when he had gone, for he was relieved then of further pretence of studying. He couldn't get

his mind on his books. The encounter with Eric Sawyer had left him irritable and restless, and he couldn't help wondering whether the fellows believed what Eric had said. He was grateful to Andy Miller for the latter's support, but it was doubtful if Andy's words had convinced anyone. And the charge was an ugly one. Steve winced when he considered it. It had seemed to him as he had left the locker room that already the fellows there had looked at him differently. He could imagine them talking about him and weighing Eric's story. Further reflections were interrupted by the reappearance of Tom, an open letter in hand and several newspapers sticking from a pocket.

"Nothing for you but a couple of papers," he said. " What do you suppose those silly fathers of ours are doing now? "

" Fighting a duel? " asked Steve with an attempt at humour.

" Not quite," Tom answered, " but they're getting ready for a law-suit."

" What about? "

" I can't make out," replied the other disgustedly, scanning the letter again. " It's something about some contract for building supplies, though. Gee, they make me tired! Always squabbling! "

"Who's bringing the suit, your father or mine?" asked Steve.

"Mine," said Tom hesitantly.

"Then I don't see that you need to blame my dad for it," retorted Steve.

"It takes two to make a quarrel, though," answered Tom sagely. "I don't believe my father would start anything like that unless—unless there was some reason for it."

"Oh, I suppose my father beat him out on a contract and he got sore," said Steve, with a short laugh. Tom looked across in surprise and puzzlement. The tone was unlike Steve, while never before had they taken sides in their fathers' disagreements. Tom opened his mouth to reply, thought better of it and slowly returned the letter to its envelope.

"I guess it'll blow over," he said finally. "I hope so."

Steve shrugged his shoulders. "Let them fight it out," he said. "It may do them good."

The next day it was soon evident to Steve that Eric Sawyer's story of the purloined blue-book was school property. Fellows whom he knew but slightly or not at all observed him doubtfully, others greeted him more stiffly—or so Steve thought—while even in the manners of such close

friends as Roy and Harry and one or two more he fancied that he could detect a difference. Much of this was probably only imagination on Steve's part, but on the other hand there were doubtless many fellows who for one reason or another chose to believe the story true. Steve was popular amongst a small circle of acquaintances and well enough liked by others who knew him only to speak to, but, naturally enough, there were fellows in school who envied him for his success at football or took exception to a certain self-sufficient air that Steve was often enough guilty of. These, together with a small number who owed allegiance to Eric Sawyer, found the story quite to their liking and doubtless told and retold it and enlarged upon it at every telling. At all events, Steve knew that gossip was busy with him. More than once conversation died suddenly away at his approach, and he told himself bitterly that the school had judged him and found him guilty. He passed Andy Miller in the corridor between recitations, and Andy, being in a hurry and having a good many things on his mind at that moment, said, "Hi, Edwards!" in a perfunctory sort of way and went by with only a glance. Steve concluded that even Andy was against him now, in spite of his defence yesterday. In the afternoon

it seemed that there was a difference in the attitudes of his team-mates on the second, and, so inflamed had his imagination become by this time, he even imagined he detected a contemptuous tone in "Boots'" speech to him! The result was that Steve "froze up solid," to use Roy's phrase, and, secretly hurt and angry, presented a scowling countenance to the world that was sufficient to discourage those who wanted and tried to let him see that they didn't believe Eric's story.

When he got back to his room after the swimming lesson that afternoon, he found Tom nursing a very red and enlarged nose. He had a wet towel in his hand and was gingerly applying it to the inflamed feature.

"What—where——" began Steve.

"Scrap with Telford," replied Tom briefly.

"What about?" demanded Steve.

"Nothing much."

"Let's see your nose."

Tom removed the towel and Steve viewed it. "He must have given you a peach," he said critically. "What did you do?"

Tom smiled reminiscently. "Nothing much," he answered.

"Huh! Let's see your knuckles. 'Nothing

much,' eh? They look it! Did faculty get on to it?"

Tom shook his head. "No, it was back of the gym. Just the two of us. It didn't last long."

"Who got the worst of it?"

"That depends on what you call the worst," answered Tom judicially. "I got this and he got one like it *and* a black eye. At least I suppose it's black by this time. It looked promising."

Steve laughed. Then he said severely: "You ought to know better than take chances like that, Tom. Suppose faculty got on to it. Besides, fighting's pretty kiddish for a Fourth Former!"

Tom viewed Steve amusedly over the wet towel. "Coming from you, Steve, that sounds great!" he said.

"Never mind about me. What I do doesn't affect you. What were you fighting about?"

Tom looked vacant and shook his head. "I don't know. Nothing special, I guess."

"Don't be a chump! You didn't black his eye and get that beautiful nose for nothing, I suppose. What was it?"

"Well, Telford said—he said——"

"You're a wonder!" declared Steve. "Don't you know what he said?"

"I forget. It was something—something I

didn't like. So I slapped his face. That was on the gym steps. He said 'Come on back here.' I said 'All right.' Then we—we had it. Then he said he was wrong about it—whatever it was, you know—and we sort of apologised and sneaked off." Tom felt of his nose carefully. "I saw about a million stars when he landed here!"

"That's the craziest stunt I ever heard of!" said Steve disgustedly. "And you want to hope hard that no one saw it. If faculty hears of it, you'll get probation, you chump."

"I know. It won't, though. No one saw us."

"Who's Telford, anyway?" Steve demanded.

"Telford? Oh, he's a Fifth Form fellow."

"What does he look like?"

"Look like?" repeated Tom vaguely. "Oh, he's a couple of inches taller than I am and has light brown hair and—and a black eye!"

"Is he the fellow who goes around with Eric Sawyer?" demanded Steve suspiciously. "Wear a brown plaid Norfolk? The fellow who shoved me into the pool the night we had that fracas with Sawyer?"

"Did he? I don't remember. I didn't see who did that. I—I guess maybe he's the chap, though. I've seen him with Sawyer, I think."

"What did he say?" asked Steve quietly.

"Who say?"

"Telford."

"When?"

"To-day! When you had the row! For the love of Mike, Tom, don't be a fool!"

"I don't remember what he said."

"Was it about—me?"

"You? Why would it be about you?" Tom attempted a laugh.

"Was it?" Steve persisted.

Tom shook his head, but his gaze wandered. Steve grunted.

"It was, then," he muttered.

"I didn't say so," protested Tom.

"I say so, though." Steve was silent a moment. Then, "Look here, Tom, there's no use your fighting every fellow who says things about me," he said. "If you try that, you'll have your hands full. I—I don't care what they say, anyway. Just you keep out of it. Understand?"

"Sure," answered the other untroubledly.

"Of course"—Steve hesitated in some embarrassment—"of course I appreciate your standing up for me and all that, but—but I'll fight my own battles, thanks, Tom."

"You're welcome," murmured Tom through

the folds of the towel. "Keep the change. I'll fight if I want to, though."

"Not on my account, you won't," said Steve sternly.

Tom grinned. "All right. I'll do it on my own account. Say, I'll bet Telford's nose is worse than mine, Steve. I gave him a bully swat!"

CHAPTER XXI

FRIENDS FALL OUT

On the eleventh of November Brimfield played her last game away from home. Chambers Technological Institute was her opponent. About every fellow in school went over to Long Island and witnessed a very sad performance by their team. The slump had arrived. That was evident from the first moment of play. Brimfield was outpunted, outrushed and outgeneraled. Chambers ran up 17 points in the first half and 13 more in the last, while all Brimfield could do was to make one solitary touchdown and a field-goal, the latter with less than thirty seconds of playing time left. Williams missed the goal after the touchdown by some ten yards. Not only was Brimfield outplayed, but she showed up wretchedly as to physical condition. It was a warm day and the Maroon-and-Grey warriors seemed to feel the heat much more than their opponents and were a sorry-looking lot by the end of the third period.

The second team attended the game in a body, "Boots" for once relenting, and looked on in

stupefied sorrow while their doughty foe was humiliated and defeated.

"Gee, I wish Robey would put us in in the next half," sighed Gafferty to Steve after the second period had reached its sad conclusion. "I'll bet you we'd put up twice the game the 'varsity has."

"I don't see what ails them," responded Steve quite affably. The calamitous drama unfolding before him had for the moment made him forget his rôle of aloofness and cynical indifference. "Why, even Andy Miller is up in the air! He hasn't caught a pass once, and he's had four chances, and he's missed enough tackles to fill a book!"

"One grand slump," said Gafferty. "That's what it is, Edwards, one wonderful, spectacular, iridescent slump! And the only person who is pleased is Danny, I guess. He's been begging the 'varsity fellows to get stale and be done with it. And now they've obliged him. Too bad, though, they couldn't have slumped the first of the week. It's fierce to be beaten by a tech school!"

In the third period Coach Robey hustled the best of his substitutes on in the hope of stemming the tide of defeat, and, while the new men showed more dash and go, they couldn't stop the triumphant advance of the black-and-orange enemy.

To make matters worse, when it was all over, Benson, who played right end, had a strained ligament in his ankle, Williams was limping with a bad knee and Quarter-back Milton had to be helped on and off the cars like a confirmed invalid. There wasn't a regular member of the 'varsity who could have stood up against a hard gust of wind five minutes after the final whistle had blown!

The school returned to Brimfield disgruntled, disappointed and critical. There was scarcely a fellow on the train who didn't have a perfectly good theory as to the trouble with the eleven and who wasn't willing and eager to explain it. As for the game with Claflin, now just a fortnight distant, why, it was already as good as lost! Anyone would have told you that. The only point of disagreement was the size of the score. That ran, according to various estimates, from 6 to 0 to 50 to 3. It was a wonder they allowed Brimfield that 3! But all this was on the way home. Gradually the reaction set in and hope crept back. After all, a slump was something you had to contend with. It happened to every team some time in the season. Perhaps it was lucky it had come now instead of later. Of course, Chambers Tech was only a fair-to-middling team and Brimfield ought to have beaten her hands down, but since she

hadn't, there was no use in worrying about it. By the time supper was over that evening, the stock of the Brimfield Football Team had risen to close to par, and anyone who had had the temerity to even suggest the possibility of a victory for Claflin would have been promptly and efficaciously squelched!

The Chambers game resulted in a shake-up. That it was coming was hinted on Monday when only a few of the substitutes on the first were given any work and four of the second team fellows were lifted from their places and shifted over to what represented the 'varsity that day. These four were Trow and Saunders, tackles; Thursby, centre, and Freer, half-back. On Tuesday the first-string 'varsity men were back at work, with the exception of Benson, whose ankle was in pretty bad condition. Thursby was given a try-out at centre and Saunders at left tackle in the short scrimmage that followed practice. Thursby showed up so brilliantly that many predicted the retirement of Innes to the bench. Saunders failed to impress Coach Robey very greatly and he and Freer and Trow went back to the second the next day. The slump was still in evidence and the work was light until Thursday. Benson was still on crutches and his place was being taken

by Roberts. Thursby ran Innes such a good race for the position of centre-rush that a substitute centre named Coolidge suddenly found his nose out of joint and faced the prospect of viewing the Claflin game from the bench.

The school held its first mass meeting on Wednesday evening of that week and cheered and sang and whooped things up with a fine frenzy. The discouragement of the Chambers game was quite forgotten. Andy Miller, in a short speech, soberly predicted a victory over Claflin, and the audience yelled until the roof seemed to shake. Coach Robey gave a résumé of the season, thanked the school for its support of the team, pledged the best efforts of everyone concerned and, while refusing to say so in so many words, hinted that Brimfield would have the long end of the score on the twenty-fifth. After that the football excitement grew and spread and took possession of the school like an epidemic. Recitations became farces, faculty fumed and threatened—and bore it, and some one hundred and fifty boys fixed their gaze on the twenty-fifth of November and lived breathlessly in the future.

There was a second mass meeting on Saturday, a meeting that ended in a parade up and down the Row, much noise and a vast enthusiasm. Brim-

field had met Southby Academy in the afternoon and had torn the visitors to tatters, scoring almost at will and sending the hopes of her adherents soaring into the zenith. To be sure, Southby had presented a rather weak team, but, as an offset to that, Brimfield had played without the services of the regular right end, without her captain and with a backfield largely substitute during most of the game. There was nothing wrong with Andy Miller, but it was thought best to save him for the final conflict. The last fortnight of a football season is a hard period for the captain, no matter how smoothly things have progressed; and Brimfield had had a particularly fortunate six weeks. Andy Miller was not the extremely nervous type, but, nevertheless, he had lost some fourteen pounds during the month and was far "finer" than Danny Moore wanted to see him. So Andy, dressed in "store clothes," saw the Southby game from the side-line, hobnobbing with the coaches and Joe Benson, still on crutches, and with Norton, who, after smashing out two touchdowns in the first period, was also taken out to be saved.

There was no trace of the slump left, and the final score that Saturday afternoon was 39 to 7, and the school was hysterically delighted, which

accounts for the added enthusiasm which kept them marching up and down the Row in the evening until the patience of a lenient faculty was exhausted, and Mr. Conklin, prodded into action by a telephone message from the Cottage, appeared and dispersed the assembly.

The second team was to go out of business on Thursday, and several members of it were eager to end the season with a banquet. Freer and Saunders dropped in on Steve and Tom Sunday afternoon to talk it over and win their support. It was a nasty day, rainy and blowy and cold, and most of the fellows were huddling indoors around the radiators. Steve and Tom, on opposite sides of the table, were chewing the ends of their pens and trying to write their Sunday letters when the visitors came. Steve was studiedly haughty, as, to his mind, became one who was unjustly suspected of dishonesty. The visitors seemed puzzled by his manner and presently addressed themselves almost entirely to Tom, who, anxious to atone for his room-mate's churlishness, was nervously affable and unnaturally enthusiastic.

"We don't see," explained Saunders, "why we shouldn't be allowed to have a banquet after we quit training. We deserve it. We've done as

much, in a way, as the 'varsity fellows to win from Claflin. We've been the goats all the season and it seems to me we ought to get something out of it. What we want to do is to go to Josh and get him to give us permission to have a blow-out in the village Thursday night."

"Or here," supplemented Freer, "if he won't let us go to the village. What do you fellows think?"

"I think it's a good scheme," answered Tom. "And we might get one over on the 'varsity, too. I mean we'd have our banquet and lots of fun whether we won from Claflin or not, while the 'varsity, if it loses the game, doesn't enjoy its banquet very much, I guess."

"Well, will you fellows come around to Brownell's room to-night after supper? Al is willing enough, but, being captain, he doesn't want to start the thing himself. We're going to see all the fellows this afternoon and then have a sort of a meeting this evening about eight. You'll come, Edwards?"

"Yes, thanks."

"All right. Come on, Jimmy. We've got several of the fellows to see yet."

"There wouldn't be very many of us, would there?" asked Tom. "Now that Robey has

pinched Thursby there's only about fifteen left on the team."

"Sixteen, but we thought we'd get Robey to come if he would, and 'Boots,' of course, and maybe Danny. That would make nineteen in all."

"Where would you have it? Is there a hotel in the village?"

"Not exactly, but there's a sort of a boarding-house there; 'Larch Villa,' they call it. They'd look after us all right. They've got a fine big dining-room which we could have all to ourselves. We haven't talked price with them yet, but Al says we could probably get a good feed for about a dollar and a half apiece. That wouldn't be so much, eh?"

"Cheap, I'd call it," said Freer.

"We'd have beefsteak and things like that, you know," continued Saunders enthusiastically, "things that are filling. No froth and whipped cream, you know! And lots of gingerale!"

"Sounds good," laughed Tom. "I wish it was to-night. Do you think Mr. Fernald will let us?"

"I don't see why not. I spoke to Mr. Conklin about it and he said he would favour it if Josh came to him about it. If he won't let us go to the village, we thought maybe he'd let us have

our feed here after the regular supper, if we paid for it ourselves. Well, you fellows show up about eight. Don't forget, because we want to get the whole bunch there and talk it all over and appoint a committee to see Josh."

Tom was silent for a minute after the visitors had departed. Then, hesitatingly, "Steve," he said, "what's the good of acting like that with fellows?"

"Like what?" asked Steve.

"You know well enough. Freezing up and talking as if you had a mouthful of icicles. You might be—be decently polite when fellows come in. Freer is a dandy chap, and Saunders is all right, too. But you treated them as if they were —were a couple of cut-throats."

"I wasn't impolite," denied Steve. "As long as those fellows choose to think what they do about me, you can't expect me to slop over with them."

"You haven't any way of knowing what they think about you," said Tom vigorously. "You take it for granted that every fellow in school believes that yarn of Sawyer's. I don't suppose a dozen fellows ever gave it a second thought."

"I know better. Don't you suppose I can tell? Almost every chap I know treats me differently

now. Even—even Roy—and Harry—act as if they'd rather not be seen with me!"

"Oh, piffle!" exclaimed Tom indignantly. "That's a rotten thing to say, Steve! Why, you might as well say that I believe the yarn!"

"You?" Steve laughed meaningly. "You wouldn't be likely to."

"Then neither would Roy or Harry. They haven't known you as long as I have, but they know you wouldn't do a thing like that."

"I don't see why not," replied Steve stubbornly. "The book was found on this table. And Sawyer says he saw me with it. I guess it would be natural for them to believe what Sawyer says."

"They don't, though, as I happen to know," replied Tom stoutly. "Even if you did bring the book up here, that doesn't mean that you were going to—to use it. What really happened, I suppose, was that you took it up without thinking and didn't realise you had it when you came back."

Steve stared at him incredulously. "Well, of all the cheek!" he gasped.

"What do you mean?" asked Tom.

"I mean that that's a fine thing for you to get off," answered Steve indignantly. "You'll be

saying next that you saw me bring the book in here that night!"

"I didn't, but—hang it, Steve, the thing *was* here! You told me so yourself. I thought you confessed that you brought it up without knowing."

"Oh, cut it," said Steve wearily. "I'm willing to be decent about it, Tom, but I don't want to listen to drivel like that."

"Drivel?" repeated the other, puzzled. "Say, what's the matter with you, anyway, Steve? I don't say you meant to cheat with the old book; I know mighty well you didn't; I told Telford so and convinced him of it, too; but I don't see why you need to get so hot under the collar when I—when I simply remind you that you *did* bring the book up here!"

"So *I* brought it up, did I?" asked Steve with an ugly laugh.

"Well, didn't you? Who did, then? You know well enough I didn't."

"Do I? How do I know it? Look here, Tom, we might as well have a show-down right now. I did not bring that blue-book into this room. I did not take it out of 'Horace's'. But 'Horace' found it on this table, poked under a pile of books. Now, then, what do *you* know about it?"

Tom stared in wide-eyed amazement for a moment. "You—you mean to say you think I did it?" he gasped finally.

Steve shrugged his shoulders.

"But—but you were here when I came back from downstairs, Steve! You saw that I didn't have it!"

"I didn't see anything of the sort. I didn't notice whether you had anything in your hands when you came in. Why should I? You might have slipped it under your coat. There's no use trying that game, Tom."

"Then why—why did you tell 'Horace' you took the book yourself if you knew you didn't?"

"Because one of us must have, you idiot."

"Oh, I see," answered Tom thoughtfully. "You wanted to keep me out of it, eh? Look here, Steve, what would I want with Upton's composition? My own was written two days before."

Steve shrugged his shoulders again impatiently. "That puzzled me. I didn't know. You did say afterwards, though, that your own comp. was pretty rotten. I didn't know but what——"

"You have a fine opinion of me, haven't you?" asked Tom bitterly. "You've known me ever

since we were kids at kindergarten and you think that of me! Thanks, Steve!"

"Well, what——"

"Now you hold on! I'm going to tell you something." Tom was on his feet now, his hands on the edge of the table, his gaze bent sternly on his chum who was seated across the littered surface. "I didn't even see that blue-book of Upton's. I'll swear it wasn't on Mr. Daley's table when I went down there. I know nothing of how it got into this room. I tell you this on my word of honour, Steve. Do you believe me?"

Steve's gaze met Tom's troubledly, then shifted. "Oh, if you say so, I suppose I'll have to. But if you didn't bring the book up here——"

"That means you don't believe me," said Tom quietly. "Very well. Now, one more thing, Steve." Tom's eyes were blazing now, though his face was white. "Don't you speak to me unless you have to from now on, until you come to me and tell me that you believe what I've told you!"

"But, Tom, you can see yourself that it's mighty queer! If you——"

"You heard what I said! Perhaps you think I owe you something for trying to shield me from Mr. Daley. I don't, though. When you set me down for a cheat you more than squared that ac-

count. That's all. After this I don't want you to speak to me."

Steve shrugged his shoulders angrily. "That goes," he said. "When you want me to speak to you, you'll ask me, Tom! And don't you forget it!

Both boys went back to their letters in silence. After a while Steve put on a raincoat and tramped down the stairs and over to Hensey. He meant to call on Andy Miller, but Andy was out and only the saturnine Williams was in the room. Although Steve had grown to like Williams very well, yet, in his present mood, the right tackle was not the sort of company Steve craved, and after a few minutes of desultory football talk he went on. He would have called on Roy and Harry, but now that he and Tom had quarrelled they would, he thought, side with Tom. In the end he found himself in the gymnasium. Several fellows were splashing about in the tank and Steve joined them. For an hour he forgot his troubles in performing stunts to the envious appreciation of the others in the pool. Applause was grateful to him that afternoon, and when he had dressed himself again and, avoiding the room, had gone across to Wendell to wait for the doors to open for supper, he felt better. Perhaps, he told himself, Tom really

didn't know anything about that plaguey book, but even so he needn't get so cocky about it! Besides, someone must have put the book on their table and—well, the evidence was certainly against Tom!

It wasn't much fun eating supper with Tom at his elbow as grim and stiff as a plaster statue. Fortunately, Steve was well into his meal before Tom came in, and meanwhile there were others of the second team to talk to if he wanted. With no Tom to converse with he found it difficult to persist in his rôle of haughty indifference toward the others. Besides—and it came to him with rather a shock—what they thought of him was no more than he had been thinking of Tom! Hang it, it was all pretty rotten! He'd like to choke Eric Sawyer!

It didn't take the rest of the fellows at the training table long to make the discovery that the two friends were at outs. Trow, a pale-faced, shock-haired chap, took delight in trying to engage them both in conversation at the same time, thereby increasing the embarrassment. Steve was heartily glad when he had finished his supper and could leave the table. Returning to his room under the circumstances was not appealing, but there seemed nowhere else to go. There was the

library, of course, but it was a dismal place on a Sunday evening, and he didn't want to read. But, as it proved, he needn't have considered avoiding the room, for Tom didn't return after supper, and Steve finished his letter home in solitude. At eight he went over to Al Brownell's room in Torrence, not because he was especially interested in the project to be discussed, but because he had agreed to attend the gathering and was glad, besides, to get away from Number 12 Billings. Life in Number 12 didn't promise to be very delightful for awhile, he thought dolefully.

In Brownell's room Steve carefully took a position as far distant from Tom as was possible. There was a lot of talk and a good deal of fun, and in the end Steve found himself chosen one of a committee of five to call on the principal and request the permission they desired. At a little after nine he walked back to Billings alone. Tom didn't return until ten and then, with never a word between them, they undressed and went to bed. Steve didn't get to sleep very easily that night. More than once he was sorely tempted to speak across the darkness and tell Tom that he did believe him and that he was sorry. And I think he would have done it, too, in the end if Tom had not fallen asleep just then and announced the fact in

the usual melodic manner. Whereupon Steve frowned, punched his pillow and flopped over.

"It isn't bothering him any," he thought. "If he wants me to speak to him, he'll have to say so. Cranky chump!"

CHAPTER XXII

STEVE GETS A SURPRISE

Mr. Fernald was surprisingly complaisant on Monday when the committee from the second team waited on him at the Cottage. He gave them permission to hold their banquet in the village and even said several nice things to them about their share in the development of the 'varsity. He warned them against rowdyism, told them they must be back promptly at nine o'clock and said he hoped they'd have a good time! After which, much surprised and not a little embarrassed, the committee backed out of the room and returned joyfully to spread the tidings. A second committee, headed by Saunders, had already been appointed to arrange for the banquet in case permission was secured and by Tuesday everything was complete. I may say here that the event duly came off on Thursday evening and was a big success. But as neither Steve nor Tom was present, our interest in the banquet is slight.

On Monday the *Review* came out. The school paper was published on the twentieth of the month,

and the December issue contained, among other features, a rather interesting resumé of the football season by Mr. Robey and a list of the games played to date. The coach's article was too long to reproduce, but the summary of the season's contests was brief enough to be set down here:

Sept. 30—Brimfield 10; Thacher 3
Oct. 4—Brimfield 10; Canterbury 7
Oct. 7—Brimfield 26; Miter Hill 0
Oct. 14—Brimfield 3; Larchville 17
Oct. 21—Brimfield 0; Benton 0
Oct. 28—Brimfield 27; Cherry Valley 6
Nov. 4—Brimfield 12; Phillips 0
Nov. 11—Brimfield 9; Chambers 30
Nov. 18—Brimfield 39; Southby 7

Brimfield had played nine games, of which she had won six, lost two and tied one, not a bad record, as the *Review* rather complacently pointed out, for a school whose football history dated back but a few years. But Brimfield didn't waste much time contemplating past performances. Had the team won every game in its schedule by an overwhelming score, the season would still be a dismal failure if it lost to Claflin, just as, if it finally won its big game, the school would rise up and call it blessed even had it lost every other contest of the season. In other words, Claflin was the only foe that really counted, and the Claflin game was the final test by which the Brimfield Football Team stood or fell.

Claflin School, at Westplains, New York, some twelve miles distant from Brimfield, was a larger school in point of enrolment, a very much older school and far more "select." I don't intend to imply by that term that the Claflin students were a finer set of fellows than those at Brimfield. Doubtless they would have averaged up about the same. But Claflin liked to be considered "select" and so I might as well accord her the distinction. Claflin had been educating the youth of New York and surrounding states for almost a hundred years, and nowadays fathers applied for admission for their boys about as soon as the boys were born. The school was in that respect like a club with a long waiting list. If a boy wasn't "entered" by the time he was five or six years old at the latest, he stood small chance of getting in when the time came.

Claflin had won from Brimfield three years on end, or ever since they had been playing together. She had started out by according Brimfield a mid-season date. The following year she had placed the game a week later and last year she had put it last on her schedule, Brimfield having by then proved herself an adversary of real merit. Oddly enough, Claflin had for some time been without a special rival and had gladly bestowed the honour

on the Maroon-and-Grey as soon as the latter had shown herself worthy. This fall Claflin had had an unusually successful season, having played seven games and won all but the last, that with Larchville. Larchville, who had defeated Brimfield 17 to 3, had also taken the measure of Claflin to the tune of 12 to 6. Brimfield read of it in the Sunday papers and took comfort. After all, Claflin was not unbeatable it seemed. Her defeat by Larchville, coupled with Brimfield's overwhelming victory over Southby, lent next Saturday's game a roseate glow, viewed from a Brimfield viewpoint. In fact, by Monday Brimfield was almost confident of at last winning from the Blue, and the question of a proper celebration of the victory was up for discussion. Of course it should be a whopping big bonfire, with a parade and speeches and singing and plenty of music! But Brimfield had never yet celebrated such a stupendous event and consequently there were no precedents to guide them. Neither was it known what attitude faculty would take in regard to such an affair. But a few choice spirits in the upper forms made tentative arrangements to the extent of picking out a likely spot in a corner of the athletic field for the fire and locating such loose material as might come in handy as fuel.

Monday's practice was short and easy. Even the second had an off-day. The 'varsity players were given a blackboard lecture in the meeting-room in the gymnasium after supper and were put through an examination on plays and signals. On Tuesday the practice was as stiff as ever. Coach Robey was not altogether satisfied with the defence, and there were forty-five minutes of the hardest sort of scrimmage in which the second was given the ball at various distances from the 'varsity goal and told to put it over. The field was closed to spectators that day and it was hard hammer-and-tongs football all the way. "Boots" drove the second with whip and spurs and the second responded nobly. But the best it could do was to drop a field-goal over the bar in the third period of the scrimmage, after having been held a half-dozen times by a desperate adversary. Steve played about as well that afternoon as he had ever played in his life. For once he had no worries on his mind. To be sure, there was still his falling-out with Tom and his quarrel with the school at large, but those things seemed rather to lend him a new strength than to bother him. He played with a dash and a reckless disregard for life and limb that made Coach Robey observe him with a new interest. Tom performed with his cus-

tomary steadiness and more than once put it over on Fowler and on Churchill, who substituted him. They were some three dozen very tired youths who finally straggled back to the gymnasium when the work was over.

On Wednesday the last real practice of the season was to be held, since the Thursday performance was more in the nature of an exhibition for the school than real work, and on Friday afternoon the team was to journey over to Oakdale, on the Sound, and remain there until Saturday forenoon. But the weather proved unkind on Wednesday. In the middle of the forenoon the wind veered around to the south and a drizzle of rain set in. By three o'clock the drizzle had grown into a very respectable downpour and the gridiron was slow and slippery. But Mr. Robey was not to be deterred and, with Danny Moore anxiously hovering about like a hen with a batch of ducklings, the 'varsity was put through a half-hour of signal work, punting and catching. Then the second, wet and muddy, came across to the first team gridiron and the two elevens leaped at each other again. Danny followed close behind, cautioning and scolding, and more than one player was dragged out of the mêlee and sent off to the gym in spite of the coach's pleas and protestations.

"I'll not have them hurted," reiterated Danny stubbornly. "'Tis no sort of a day for hard work, Coach. I've got 'em through this far an' I'll not be havin' them breakin' their legs an' arms for the sake of a bit of practice, sir."

"Hang their arms and their legs!" fumed Mr. Robey. "They might as well not have any as start the game Saturday half-baked! Give me a chance, Danny!"

"'Tis takin' big chances, sir, playin' 'em on this sort of a field."

"Then we'll take chances!" growled the coach. "Now get in there, first, and rip it up! Show what you can do! You've got six to go on third down; put it over! Wait a minute! Thursby! Get in there for Innes and hold that centre of the line steady."

"Trot all the way in, my boy, and get a good rubbin'," directed Danny to the discomforted Innes. "Hi! Put your blanket on! Are you crazy?"

"Play lower there, Hall! Throw them back, second!" entreated "Boots." "Don't let them have an inch!"

Then the first piled through Brownell for three yards, slipping in the mud, panting, grunting to the accompaniment of thudding feet and the *swish*

of wet canvas. Above the players a cloud of steam hovered as they disentangled themselves. Danny darted into the confusion. Benson was on his back, thrashing his arms.

"Water!" bawled Danny.

A helper raced on with a slopping pail. Danny's fingers went exploring.

"Ankle," groaned Benson, and Danny shot a triumphantly accusing look at Coach Robey. In a minute Benson was being helped off and the game was on again, but Mr. Robey showed a distinct aversion to meeting the trainer's glance. Later, in the gymnasium, it was known that Benson had hurt the bad ankle again and would not be able to play the game through on Saturday, even if he was allowed to get into it at all. Coach Robey accepted the tidings with a shrug and a scowl.

"Fine!" he said sarcastically. "Claflin's left end is the best player they've got. Roberts will stand a fine chance against him! Look here, Danny, I thought you said Benson's ankle was all right?"

"So I did! And so it was all right!" sputtered Danny. "But I didn't say he could go out an' play on a field like that to-day, did I?"

"All right. It can't be helped now. Where's Captain Miller?"

Danny bent his head backward toward the rubbing room. "In there," he answered shortly.

"Heard about Benson?" asked the coach.

Andy, looking a trifle pale and tired, nodded silently as the rubber kneaded his back. Mr. Robey frowned a moment.

"You'll have to change over," he said finally. Andy grunted agreement. "And we'll have to take Turner or Edwards from the second to-morrow and beat him into shape."

"Edwards is the better," said Andy.

"I suppose so. If he played the way he played yesterday and to-day he might have a chance against Mumford. Still——"

"I'd better take that end," said Andy. "Let Roberts start the game at left and then put in Edwards—unless Benson mends enough."

"He won't," said the coach pessimistically. "You can't play end with a sore ankle. He's out of it, Andy. Tough luck, too. I'll find Edwards and tell him to join the squad to-night. He's got to learn signals and plays and——" The coach's voice dwindled into silence and he gloomed frowningly out the window. "I wish now I'd let Danny have his way," he lamented. "We could

have run through plays indoors and had a hard practice to-morrow. Well——" He shrugged his shoulders again and his gaze came back to Andy. "How are you?" he asked. "You look a bit fagged."

"I'll be all right after supper," replied the captain. "I'll be glad when Saturday night comes, though." And he smiled a trifle wanly as he slipped off the table.

Mr. Robey grunted. "So will I. Somehow, this year seems to mean more, Andy. Still, there's no use in worrying about it. Much better not think of it any more than you can help."

"I know," agreed Andy as he wrapped a big towel about his glowing body and moved toward the door, "but when you're captain it—it's a whole lot different. There's Edwards over there. Shall I call him?"

The coach nodded. "I think so. He's better than Turner, isn't he? Left end is Turner's position, though."

"Edwards'll take to it quick enough. He's got more bulldog than Turner has, too. I guess he's the man for us. Oh, Edwards! Will you come over here a minute?"

Steve pushed his way through the crowded aisles, past Thursby who winked and grinned and

whispered "You're going to catch it!" past Tom who turned his head away as he approached, past Eric Sawyer, a big hulk in a crimson bathrobe, who scowled upon him, and so to where, by the rubbing room door, the captain and coach awaited him. It was Mr. Robey who brusquely made the announcement. The coach was anxious and tired to-day and his voice was harsh.

"Edwards, you join the 'varsity to-night. We may have to use you at left end. Benson's pretty badly hurt, I understand. Be upstairs at eight-fifteen promptly. You've got to learn the signals and about fifteen plays before Saturday. Tell your coach I've taken you, please."

"Yes, sir." Steve's eyes, round and questioning, turned to the captain. Andy smiled a little.

"Rather sudden, eh?" he asked. "Do your best to learn, Edwards. Get the signals and plays down pat. There isn't much time, but you can do it if you'll put your mind on it. You wanted to make the 'varsity, you know, and now you've done it, and here's your chance to make good, Edwards. But you've got to work like thunder, old man!" He laid a hand on Steve's shoulder and his fingers tightened as he went on. "Everyone's got his hands full right now, you see, and there's no one to coach you much. You've got to buckle down

and learn things yourself. You can do it, all right. And on Saturday, if you get in—and I can't see how you can help it—you've got to play real football, Edwards. Think you can do all that?"

"Yes." Steve's heart was thumping pretty hard and his breathing was uncertain, as though he had raced the length of the field with a pigskin tucked in the crook of his arm, and his gaze sought the floor for fear those two would read the almost tragic ecstasy that shone in them. "Yes," he repeated, "I'll learn. And I'll—I'll play!"

"All right. You'd better join the 'varsity table to-night. See Lawrence about it. That's all." Coach Robey nodded and turned away. Andy Miller, following, paused and stepped back. One hand clutched the folds of the big towel about him, the other was stretched out to Steve.

"I'm glad, Edwards," he said in a low voice as Steve's hand closed on his. Steve nodded. He wasn't quite certain of his voice just then. "You'll do your best for us, won't you, old man?"

Steve gulped. "I—I'll play till I drop," he muttered huskily.

CHAPTER XXIII

DURKIN SHEDS LIGHT

Steve felt frightfully lonely that evening. He wanted so much to talk over his good fortune with Tom. But Tom, very grave of countenance, sat in frozen silence across the table and never so much as glanced his way. Had he done so he might have caught one of the wistful looks bent upon him and, perhaps, relented. Not being able to discuss the amazing thing which had happened to him, detracted at least half the pleasure, Steve sadly reflected. Of course Tom knew of it, for Steve had sat at the 'varsity training table at supper-time and he could still hear in imagination the buzz of interest that had filled the hall when, somewhat consciously skirting the second team table, he had walked to the corner and sank into a seat between Fowler and Churchill. They had been very nice to him at the 'varsity table. Only Roberts, who might be expected to view his appearance with misgivings, had eyed him askance. Poor Joe Benson was confined to the dormitory. Thursby, himself only a recent addition to the big

squad, grinned at Steve from the length of the long table in a way which seemed to say: " They had to have us! I guess we fellows on the second team are pretty bad, what? "

But now, back in his room, with his books spread out before him and his mind in a strange tumult of elation and fear and dejection, he hardly knew whether to be glad of or sorry for his promotion. Study, at all events, was quite out of the question to-night, but luckily he was well enough up in his lessons to be able to afford one hour of idleness. He considered writing home to his father and recounting the story of his good fortune to him, for it seemed that he must talk to someone about it, and he even dragged a pad of paper toward him and unscrewed his fountain pen. But, after tracing meaningless scrawls for several minutes, he gave it up. He didn't want to write a letter; he wanted to talk to Tom!

He saw the hands of his watch creep toward the hour of eight, after which he might give up pretence of study, don a sweater and a pair of canvas " sneakers " and go over to the gymnasium. The thought of that and of the next three days put him in a blue funk. What if he couldn't learn the signals, or, having learned them, forgot them in the game? What if he disappointed Andy and

Coach Robey when the time came? He had visions of getting his signals mixed, of fumbling the ball at critical moments, of losing the game through his stupidity. There were times when he devoutly hoped that Joe Benson would recover the use of that ankle and get into the contest so that he [Steve] might not be called on to take part!

Then, at last, eight o'clock struck sonorously in the tower of Main Hall, and he closed his books with a sigh of relief, piled them up and went to the closet. When he was ready to go out Tom was still bent over his studies. Steve hesitated a moment with his hand on the knob. He wanted Tom to wish him luck. He wondered if Tom guessed how sort of lonesome and scared he felt. But Tom never even raised his eyes and so Steve went out, closing the door softly behind him, and made his way through a dripping rain to the lighted porch of the gymnasium. Only a half-dozen fellows were there when he reached the meeting room. The settees had been moved aside and the floor was empty and ready for them. Steve nodded to the others and perched himself on one of the low windowsills to wait. In twos and threes the players stamped up the stairs, laughing, jostling. Milton and Kendall, entering together, seized each other and began to waltz over the

floor. Steve wondered how they could take such a serious business so light-heartedly. Then Joe Lawrence, the manager, a football under his arm, came in with Williams and, glancing at his watch, began calling the roll. In the middle of it Coach Robey and Andy Miller and Danny Moore arrived. More lights were turned on and Mr. Robey swung the blackboard on the platform nearer the front.

"We'll try Number Six," he announced. Very quickly and surely he scrawled the formation on the board, added curving lines and dotted lines, dropped the chalk and faced the room. "All right, Milton. First-string fellows in this and the rest of you watch closely."

"Line up!" chirped Milton. "Formation A!" The players sprang to their places, their rubber-soled shoes patting softly on the boards. "21—14—63—66!" called the quarter. "21—14—63——"

The backs, who had shifted to the left in a slanting tandem, trotted forward, the ball was passed, the line divided and Still slipped through.

"Norton, you were out of position," said Mr. Robey. "Look at the board, please. Your place is an arm's length from left half. You've got to follow closely on that. Try it again, please."

So it went for nearly an hour, the substitutes

gradually taking the places of the first-string players. Steve, who had had the signals explained to him earlier, managed to get through without mistakes, but as an end he had little to do in the drill. After the coach had watched them go through some fourteen plays, the settees were dragged out into the floor again, the players seated themselves and the coach drew diagrams and explained them and examined the squad in signals as he went along. It was all over at a little after nine, but not for Steve. Andy Miller took him back to his room with him and for a good half-hour Steve was coached on formations, plays and signals. When, finally, he went back to Billings his head was absolutely seething and it was long after eleven before sleep finally came to him. When it did, it was a restless and disturbed slumber that was filled with dreams and visions.

He awoke earlier than usual the next morning, feeling almost as tired as when he had gone to bed. But, although he strove to snatch a nap before it was time to get up, sleep refused to return to him. His mind was too full. Across the room Tom was snoring placidly, both arms clutched about a pillow and his face almost buried from sight. Steve envied him his untroubled state of mind. Then he began to go over what he had

learned the evening before and found himself in a condition of panic because for the life of him he couldn't remember half of the stuff that had been hammered into his tired brain! Steve was not the only fellow at training table that morning who showed a distaste for the excellent breakfast that was served. More than one chap looked pale and anxious and only trifled with the food before him. Steve stumbled through recitations, earning a warning look from "Uncle Sim," managed to observe more or less faithfully the schedule he had set for himself and turned up at dinner table with a very good appetite. After dinner he wrote a notice and posted it on the bulletin board in the gymnasium.

"No Swimming Classes until Monday. S. D. Edwards."

The school turned out to a boy that afternoon and paraded to the field to watch the final practice. Massed on the grand stand, they sang their songs and cheered the players and the team all during a half-hour of signal drill and punting. There was no scrimmage until the first-string men had trotted off the field. Then the 'varsity substitutes and the second team faced each other for fifteen minutes and the second scored a field-goal. Steve played at left end on the substitute

eleven, made one or two mistakes in signals and failed at any time to distinguish himself. But the game was slow and half-hearted, for the substitutes were continually warned against playing too hard and so risking injury. When it was over, the second cheered the 'varsity, the subs cheered the second and the spectators formed two abreast again and trailed across the field to the gymnasium and there once more cheered everyone from Captain Miller and Coach Robey down to the last substitute—who was Steve—Danny Moore and Gus, the rubber. It had drizzled at times during the afternoon, but before the final "Rah, rah, Brimfield! Rah, rah, Brimfield! Rah, rah, Brimf-i-e-l-d!" had died away, the clouds broke in the west and the afternoon sun shone through. This was accepted joyfully as a good omen and the crowd outside the gymnasium broke into a chorus of ecstatic "A-a-ays!"

Practice was over early, and at half-past four Steve, parting from Thursby at the corner of Wendell, made his way along the Row, half wishing that he had not cancelled the swimming hour to-day. At the entrance to Torrence a voice hailed him from the doorway, and "Penny" Durkin, wild of hair and loose-limbed, stepped out.

"Hello." said Durkin. "Say, I've got the

dandiest rug upstairs you ever saw, Edwards. It's a regular Begorra."

"What's a Begorra?" asked Steve with a smile.

"Oh, it's one of those rare Oriental rugs, you know."

"You mean Bokhara," laughed Steve.

Durkin blinked. "Something like that," he agreed. "Anyway, it's a peach. Come up and have a look at it."

"No, thanks. I'm not buying rugs to-day."

"Tell you what I'll do," pursued Durkin, undismayed. "I'll fetch it over to your room and you can see how it looks. It's got perfectly wonderful tones of—of old rose and—and blue and——"

"Nothing doing, Durkin. We don't need any rugs."

"You're missing a bargain," warned the other. "Say, I've still got that shoe-blacking stand I told you about. No, I didn't tell you, did I? I left a note under your door one evening, though. Did you get it?"

"Note? Why, yes, I think so. Yes, we got it. I'd forgotten."

Durkin chuckled. "That was the time I gave Sawyer the scare."

"How?" asked Steve idly.

"Didn't he tell you?"

"Sawyer? Not likely." And Steve smiled.

"That's so, I did hear that you and he were scrapping one day. You used to be pretty chummy, though, didn't you?"

"Never," replied Steve with emphasis. Durkin blinked again and looked puzzled.

"Well, he was trying to find you that night. So I supposed——"

"What night?"

"The night I went to tell you about that shoeblacking stand. It's almost as good as new, Edwards——"

"You say Sawyer was looking for me that night? How do you know? He couldn't have been, because I'd met him earlier in the hall downstairs."

"I don't know. He said he was. Anyhow, he was in your room——"

"Sawyer?" demanded Steve incredulously. "Eric Sawyer?"

Durkin nodded.

"You're crazy," laughed Steve.

"Well, he was," answered the other indignantly. "He came out just as I was tucking that note under the door and fell over me and let out a

yell you could have heard half-way to New York. You see, I didn't know there was anyone there. I knocked at first and thought I heard someone moving around in there. Then I tried the door and it was locked——"

"You had the wrong room," said Steve. "We never lock our door except when we go to bed."

"Wrong room nothing! You got the note, didn't you? Well, I didn't leave any notes anywhere else."

"But—now, look here, Durkin. I want to get this right. You say you went to our room and knocked and—— Was there a light there?"

"No. The transom was dark. When I couldn't get in I went back down the corridor to where the light is and scribbled that note. Then I went back and tucked it under the door. I guess I didn't make much noise because I had a pair of rubber-soled shoes on and so Sawyer didn't hear me. Anyway, he opened the door just then and it was fairly dark there and he nearly broke his silly neck on me. Scared me, too, for the matter of that! I didn't think there was anyone in there. Say, is there anything up? You look sort of funny."

"N-no, nothing much. You're sure it was Sawyer who came out?"

"Of course I'm sure. He let out a yell and picked himself up and began to scold. Wanted to know what I meant by it and I said I was sticking a note under your door and he said 'Oh!' and something about wanting to see you and waiting for you. Then he said he guessed you weren't coming back yet and he'd go on."

"What time was this, Durkin?"

"Oh, a little after eight, I suppose; half-past, maybe. I stopped to see Whittaker on the floor below, I remember. He said he'd look at that stand, but he never did. If you want a bargain, Edwards, now's your chance. I'll let you have it for a dollar and a quarter. It cost two and a half. I bought it from——"

"Oh, confound your old stand! Look here, Durkin, will you tell Mr. Daley just what you've told me if I want you to?"

"Eh?" asked Durkin in alarm. "Oh, I don't know. I don't want to get anyone into trouble. I—I'd rather not, I guess. You see, Sawyer——"

"If you will, I—I'll buy your old shoe-blacking stand or your rug or—or anything you like!" said Steve earnestly. "Will you?"

"Why, maybe I might if you put it that way. The rug's two dollars."

"All right," answered Steve impatiently. "Where are you going to be for the next hour?"

"Upstairs, practising. Come and see it any time you like. It really is a peach, Edwards, and it's scarcely worn at all. It—it's a prayer rug, too, and they're scarcer than hens' teeth nowadays!"

But Steve was already yards away and Durkin shrugged his shoulders and turned back into Torrence.

"Wonder what's up," he murmured. "I'd hate to get Sawyer into a scrape. Still, if he will buy that rug——"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DAY BEFORE THE BATTLE

Tom was attiring himself in his Sunday best. It was almost six o'clock and one of Hoskins' barges was to leave Main Hall at half-past with the members of the second team, for this was the evening of the banquet in the village. Tom didn't feel unduly hilarious, however. He was sorry that the football season was over, for one thing, for he loved the game. And then existence of late had been fairly wearing and mighty unsatisfactory. His quarrel with Steve was a tiresome affair and he didn't see just how it was to end. For his part, in spite of the fact that his chum had hurt him a good deal by his mean suspicion of him, he was ready to make up, only—well, he had some pride, after all, and it did seem as if the first overtures should come from Steve. No, on the whole, Tom wasn't looking forward to the banquet with any great amount of enjoyment. If Steve was going to be there, too——

Someone came hurrying down the corridor, the room door flew open and there stood Steve him-

self, a radiant and embarrassed look on his face, his gaze searching the room for Tom. His face fell a little as he found the room apparently empty, and then lighted again as his glance discovered Tom at the closet door, Tom half-dressed and with a pair of trousers dangling over his arm. Out went Steve's hand as he turned.

"I'm sorry, Tom," he said simply. "I was a beast."

Tom took the hand that was offered and squeezed it hard.

"That's all right," he stammered. "So was I."

"No, you were right, Tom," answered Steve convincedly. "I hadn't any business suspecting you of a thing like that. And—and I want to tell you first that I knew I was wrong a long time ago, before this happened. You believe that, don't you?"

"Yes, Steve, but—what is it that's happened?"

"It's all clear as daylight," said Steve, grinning happily as he seated himself on the bed and tossing his cap toward the table. "It was Sawyer did it. He put up the whole job. He fessed up when 'Horace' got at him. Durkin met him coming out and——"

"Hold on!" begged Tom. "I don't quite get you, Steve!"

Steve laughed. "Sort of confused narrative, eh? Well, listen, then. Drop those trousers and sit down a minute."

"All right, but the barge leaves at half-past——"

"Never you mind the barge, old man! You're not going in it. I'll come to that later, though."

"Take your time," said Tom, dropping into a chair. "I love to hear your innocent prattle."

"Shut up! It's like this, Tom. I met Durkin awhile ago and he got to talking about that shoe-blacking stand. Remember the note he left here that night?" Tom nodded. "Well, it came out that while he was putting it under our door Eric Sawyer walked out and fell over him."

"Out of here?"

"Right-o! Sawyer said he'd been waiting to see me. Now you remember I'd seen him coming out of Daley's room earlier, eh? Well, it seems that Sawyer saw a chance to put up a game on me. So after I'd gone upstairs again, he sneaked back to 'Horace's' room, got that confounded blue-book of Upton's and waited his chance. After we'd left the room he came up here and slid the thing among some books on the table there.

While he was in here Durkin came along and knocked and Sawyer slipped over and locked the door. Then he waited until he thought Durkin had gone and unlocked the door again and came out. But old Durkin had written a note to us down under the light and come back with it and he was putting it under the door when Sawyer came out and fell over him. Of course, when Durkin told me that I had a hunch what had happened and I hot-footed it to 'Horace.' He confessed that it was Sawyer who had told him he'd seen me carrying off the book. So he streaked off after Sawyer, found him somewhere and took him to Durkin's room. Sawyer——"

"Were you there too?" asked Tom excitedly.

"No, he told me to wait in his study for him. He was back in about a half-hour looking sort of worried. Of course Sawyer had to own up. He told 'Horace' that he'd just done it for a joke, but 'Horace' didn't believe him for a cent. And there you are!" Steve ended in breathless triumph. Tom viewed him round-eyed.

"What—what about Sawyer?" he asked.

"I don't know for certain, but I think Sawyer's on pro. Anyway, Tom, I know this much: You don't go to any old banquet to-night."

"I don't? Why don't I?"

"Because I met Lawrence downstairs a few minutes ago. He was looking for you."

"Wh-what for?" asked Tom faintly.

"Robey says you're not to break training, Tom! You're to report at the 'varsity table to-night for supper!" Whereupon Steve, his eyes dancing, jumped from the bed and pulled Tom to his feet. "What do you say to that, old Tommikins?" he exulted.

Tom, dazed, smiled weakly. "Do you mean—do you mean they want me to *play?*" he murmured.

"Oh, no," scoffed Steve, pushing him toward the bed on which he subsided in a heap. "They want you to carry the footballs and sweep the gridiron! Of course they want you to play, you old sobersides! Don't you see that with Sawyer on pro there's a big hole in the line? I suppose they'll give Churchill the first chance at it, but he won't last the game through. Think of both you and I making the 'varsity, Tom! How's that for luck, eh? Not bad for the old Tannersville High School, is it? I guess we've gone and put Tannersville on the map, Tom!"

"Gee, I'm scared!" muttered Tom, looking up at Steve with wide eyes. "I—I don't believe I'll do it!"

"You don't, eh? Well, you're going to do it! Get your old duds on and hurry up. It's after six."

"I'll have to tell Brownell I'm not going to the feast." Tom gazed fascinatedly at his best trousers draped across the chair back. "Anyway, I wasn't keen on going—without you," he murmured.

"There's only one drawback," said Steve a few minutes later, when they were on their way to supper. "And that is that I promised Durkin to buy a rug from him."

"A rug? We don't need any rug, do we?" asked Tom.

"Not a bit. But this is a genuine Begorra; Durkin says so himself. And I agreed to buy it if he'd tell 'Horace' about Sawyer. Unless—unless you'd rather have the shoe-blacking stand, Tom?"

"I would. If we had that, perhaps you'd keep your shoes decent!"

Steve tipped Tom's cap over his eyes. "Rude ruffian!" he growled affectionately.

There was no practice at Brimfield Friday, for as soon as the last recitation of the day was over the 'varsity team and substitutes piled into two of Hoskins' barges in front of Main Hall to be

driven over to Oakdale, some five miles distant. The school assembled to see them off, and there was much hilarity and noise. Joe Lawrence, note-book in hand, flustered and anxious, mounted the steps and called the names of the squad members.

"Benson!"

"Here," responded Benson from where, at the far end of one of the barges, he sat, crutches in hand, looking a bit disconsolate.

"Churchill, Corcoran, Edwards, Fowler, Gleason, Guild, Hall, Harris, Innes—Innes?"

"Coming fast!" shouted a voice from the edge of the throng, and the big centre, suit-case in hand, pushed his way toward the barges.

"Right through!" laughed the fellows. "Hit the line, Innes! A-a-ay!"

"Kendall," continued Lawrence. "Lacey, Marvin, Miller, Milton, McClure, Norton, Roberts, Still, Thursby, Williams!"

"All present and accounted for," announced a voice in the crowd. "Home, James!"

Coach Robey and "Boots" appeared. Danny Moore, who with Gus, the rubber, sat on the driver's seat surrounded with suit-cases, took the bags, Joe Lawrence and Tracey Black, assistant manager, squeezed into the already overcrowded

barges, Blaisdell, baseball captain, called for a cheer and, amidst a thunderous farewell, the squad, grinning and waving, disappeared down the drive, through the gate and out on to the road.

Oakdale was fairly deserted at this time of year. Most of the summer cottages were closed, but the little hotel kept open the year around, and when, at four o'clock, the barges pulled up in front of it, fires were snapping in the open fireplaces and everything was in readiness for the squad's reception. Followed a very merry and rather boisterous time while the fellows, bags in hand, sought their rooms to don their togs and report for light practice on the lawn. There was only signal drill to-day, and that was brief. Afterwards the centres practised passing and the kickers limbered up a little, but by five the work was over and the fellows were free to do what they liked. Some gathered around the two big fireplaces in the hotel, others went for strolls along the road, and still others, Steve and Tom amongst the number, sought the little cove nearby where a diminutive and rather pebbly beach curved from point to point and a boat-landing stuck out into the quiet water. The trees and grass went almost to the edge and there were com-

fortable benches along the bank from which one might look across the Sound to the Long Island shore or watch the boats pass. It had been a fair, mild day and the light still held. Steve and Tom sauntered down to the float and Steve dipped an inquiring hand into the water.

"Say, that isn't a bit cold," he announced. "What do you say to a swim, Tom?"

"Fine, only we haven't any suits."

"Maybe they've got some at the hotel. Let's ask." On the way up they met Norton, Williams and Marvin. "Come on in swimming, fellows," called Steve.

"Can we?" asked Norton. "Who says so?"

"Why not? We're going to see if we can find some trunks or something."

"All right. You'd better ask the coach, though." This from Marvin. "He's in the office, I think. If you find any trunks bring some for us, Edwards."

The clerk was rather dubious at first, but eventually returned with a miscellaneous collection of bathing togs from which the boys finally evolved three pairs of trunks and two suits. Meanwhile Mr. Robey had given hesitant permission.

"If the water's very cold, Edwards, don't try

it, please. And, in any case, don't stay in more than ten minutes. That goes for all of you."

There was a bathing pavilion farther along, reached from the little beach by a flight of wooden steps, and to this the five boys proceeded, examining the attire the clerk had provided with much amusement.

"I won't be able to swim a stroke," declared Norton. "I'll just be doubled up laughing at Hath in that blue-striped thing he has there."

"Huh," growled Williams, "I don't think you'll get any prizes for beauty yourself!"

By this time the news of their exploit had gone out and other fellows were hurrying to the hotel to seek bathing suits. A few secured them and the rest followed down to watch. When they met outside, dressed for the plunge, the five went off into gales of laughter. Hatherton Williams in a blue-and-white-striped suit many sizes too small for him cut a ridiculous figure, while Norton, whose faded red trunks had lost their gathering string, held his attire frantically with one hand and implored a pin! Tom's trunks were strained to the bursting point and Steve's were inches too large for him. Only Marvin had fared well, being dressed in what he called "a real classy two-piece

suit.'' The two pieces didn't match in either colour or material, but they nearly fitted and, unlike Hatherton Williams' regalia, were innocent of holes. Norton declared that he was extremely glad it was getting dark, since otherwise if the pin one of the onlookers had supplied him with gave way, he'd have to stay in the water.

Steve and Marvin led the way to the float and they all plunged in. Tom, shaking the water from his head, faced Steve accusingly when he had regained his breath. '' Thought you said it wasn't cold!'' he shrieked. '' It's freezing! Br-r-r!''

'' Move around and get warm,'' advised Norton, striking out. '' It isn't bad when you get used to it.''

But Tom, accustomed to the tempered water of the school tank, groaned and refused to be optimistic. '' Bet it isn't a bit over forty-five,'' he muttered.

Steve was already well out in the cove, pursued by Norton. Some of the boys who had failed to find suits had launched a decrepit rowboat and, with one broken oar, were splashing about near the float. Far out in the Sound a big white steamer passed eastward, her lights showing white in the gathering darkness and the strains

from her orchestra coming faintly across the quiet water. The boys in the rowboat stopped skylarking to discuss what steamer it was, and Marvin, who had swam up behind and laid hands on the gunwale, told them that it was the *Lusitania* and that if they didn't agree with him he'd tip them over. Discussion ceased at once. The four mariners instantly declared that he was right. Churchill even went so far as to say that he had known it was the *Lusitania* all the time; that he could always tell her by her funnels. Innes, who was seated in the stern and filling his position to the limit, acknowledged that for an instant—oh, the merest fraction of a second!—he had thought the steamer was the *Ne'er-do-well,* Berlin to Kansas City, but that he had seen his mistake almost instantly! By which time, the *Priscilla,* New York to Fall River, had passed out of sight, and Marvin, merely tipping the boat until the water ran in a bit over one side, just as a mark of esteem, swam off before Guild could reach him with the broken oar.

Tom and Williams were paddling about not far off the landing, Tom floating on his back most of the time and complaining about the temperature of the water, when Norton swam up, puffing and blowing.

"Where's Steve?" asked Tom. Norton nodded toward the Long Island shore.

"Somewhere out there," he answered. "He was too much for me. I had to quit. The chump swims like a—a dolphin. I'm going in, fellows. I'm getting cold."

"I guess we'd all better," agreed Williams. "Hello! What's that?"

"*Help!*" From somewhere beyond the mouth of the little cove the cry came, sharp, imperative, and was repeated again while they listened.

"It's Edwards," muttered Norton uneasily. "I suppose he's only trying to get a rise out of us. He can swim like——"

"Must be," agreed Williams. "Can you see him?"

The cove was dim now and the surface of the water beyond held a sheen of light that confused the vision.

"I'm not sure," muttered Norton. "I thought I did—for a minute."

"Who was that yelling out there?" shouted one of the fellows in the boat.

"Must be Edwards," answered Williams. "Can you see him?"

"No. Do you suppose——"

"*Help!* This way!" The cry came again,

fainter now, and someone in the boat seized the broken oar and began to churn the water with it, sending the crazy craft circling about in its length.

"He's in trouble!" cried Norton. "Cramps, probably. I'm off, Hath. Will you come? Where's Hall?"

"He started a minute ago," answered Williams, striking out with long hard sweeps of legs and arms. "There he is, ahead."

"Come on with that boat, you fellows!" shouted Norton. "And hurry it up!"

CHAPTER XXV

TOM TO THE RESCUE

"We've only got one oar," answered a desperate voice.

"Put it over the stern and scull it," directed someone on the float. There was a splash in reply, and Innes, who had promptly vacated his seat, crawled dripping to the landing. Hatherton Williams, Norton and Marvin were already swimming desperately toward the mouth of the cove, while several fellows on land were running hard to the point, following the curving shore. The rowboat was at last under way, but making slow progress. Norton was the best swimmer of the trio, or, at least, the fastest, and Williams and Marvin were soon hopelessly in the rear. But Norton, if he could distance the other two, found that he was gaining but slowly on Tom, who, swimming as he had never swam before, as he didn't know he could swim, was already well out toward the mouth of the cove.

His limbs were aching already, and his lungs were hurting as he fought his way through the

water and against a slow-coming tide. But the only thought that possessed him was that Steve was in trouble out there, perhaps drowning, and that he must get to him. The water splashed into his eyes and blinded him, for Tom was not an adept swimmer, and not once could he so much as sight Steve. Neither was the appeal for help repeated and Tom's heart sank. Behind him, as he was dimly aware, others were following, and he wished they would hurry. Once, when he was opposite the points, he tried to call, but his lungs were too tired to respond in more than a whisper. Then he was past the gloom of the cove, the water was alight with the afterglow and little choppy waves dashed against him. Gasping, he paused an instant, brushed one arm against his dripping face and looked about him. For a moment nothing met his anxious gaze. Then a darker spot on the darkening water appeared a dozen yards away and Tom went on desperately, panic-stricken for fear that when he reached it it would prove to be only a bit of driftwood.

But it wasn't. It was Steve, Steve on his back, with only his head and shoulders above the water, eyes closed in a dead-white face and his arms weakly moving now and then as though in an unconscious endeavour to keep the helpless body

afloat. A great wave of relief and joy almost stopped Tom's heart for an instant. Then his hand went out and caught one of Steve's wrists.

"It's all right, Steve," he gasped weakly. "Don't grab me. They're coming with the boat."

There was no reply from Steve, and Tom, pulling the arm over his shoulder, as he had seen Steve himself do so many times in the tank when illustrating the way to rescue a drowning person, felt the weight of the inert form on his back as he turned and strove to swim slowly back toward the cove. To swim with one arm, even to keep himself afloat so, was no light task for Tom, and now, with the weight of Steve's body bearing him down, he found the struggle too much for him. He relinquished all attempts to swim and centred his efforts in keeping afloat. If only Norton and the rest would come! He listened. There was a splashing somewhere nearby, but it was too dark now to see a dozen feet away. Tom drew all the breath he could find into his lungs and let it out in a weak shout.

"Help!" he gasped. "Here!"

Then there was an answering hail from close by, a mighty churning of the water and a dim form plunged alongside.

"Have you got him?" cried Norton. "Give him to me, Hall. Hath! Over here!"

Tom didn't relinquish quite all his burden, though. He still had one of Steve's arms around his neck when, a minute later, Marvin and Williams having reached them meanwhile, the rowboat appeared out of the darkness. It was no light task to get Steve into the boat, but it was accomplished somehow, and then, Tom dragging astern, hands clutching the gunwale grimly, and the others, too, claiming at least partial support from the boat, the rescuers turned shoreward. Wisely, Churchill, who handled the oar, headed the boat toward the nearer point, and when the keel grounded, eager hands were waiting to lift Steve out and hurry him back to the hotel. Tom crawled out of the water and subsided on the bank, still fighting for breath and feeling rather sick at his stomach. Between Fowler and Milton he was lifted and half carried, weakly protesting that he could walk all right and promptly crumpling up when they allowed him to try.

Steve had been taken up to the room he was occupying, and Danny Moore was administering to him when Tom was brought in and laid on his bed. Steve was already talking weakly and Danny was telling him to keep still.

"Don't be talking," he said. "Fit that bottle to your back and keep covered up. You'll be fine in an hour. An' who've you got there? Well, if it ain't my old friend Jim Hall!"

Tom smiled faintly as Danny bent over him.

"An' so you been tryin' to drown yourself too, have you?" continued Danny. "Well, well, 'tis queer tastes you have, the two of you! Drink a bit o' this, Jim, and lie still."

Mr. Robey came in and Danny nodded reassuringly to him. "They'll be fine as fiddles in an hour, Coach. Now you boys scatter out o' here an' leave them have a bit nap."

Tom didn't remember much for awhile after that, for he must have fallen promptly to sleep. When he awoke, the light was turned low and Steve was sitting on the edge of the bed. On a chair beside him was a tray from which appetizing odours curled toward him. Tom blinked sleepily.

"Hello," he murmured. "What's up?"

"I am and you're not," answered Steve. "I've brought you some supper. Are you hungry?"

Recollection returned then and Tom observed his chum anxiously.

"Are you all right?" he demanded. "Did they say you could get up?"

"Of course. You can too after you eat. But you were asleep and Danny said you might as well have it out. How are you feeling?"

Tom sat up experimentally and took a deep breath. "All right," he answered stoutly, although as a matter of fact he was full of stiff spots and queer aches. "And—and I'm hungry."

"Good stuff!" laughed Steve. He lifted the tray to Tom's lap and took the covers from the dishes. "There isn't an awful lot here," he added apologetically, "but Danny said you'd be better if you didn't eat such a big supper. Do you mind?"

"No, I guess there's enough. That soup smells good. What's that there? Roast beef? Fine!" And Tom fell diligently to work.

Steve watched in silence a moment. Then, "I say, Tom," he said.

"Huh?" asked the other, his mouth full.

"You know I—I'm much obliged."

Tom nodded carelessly. "All right," he said in a gruff voice. "It wasn't anything. Norton and Williams and those others did it."

"You got there first," said Steve. "I guess if you hadn't I—I wouldn't have waited for the rest. It was mighty plucky, and—and I——"

It was Steve, Steve on his back, with only his head and shoulders above the water

"Oh, cut it," growled Tom. "It wasn't anything, you ass. What the dickens did you go away out there for anyway?" Tom became indignant. "Haven't you got any sense?"

"Not much," laughed Steve. Then, soberly, "It's the first time I ever had cramps, and I don't ever want them again! I thought I was a goner there for a while, Tom. They caught me right across the small of my back and I couldn't any more move my legs than I could fly. All I could do was shout and wiggle my arms a bit, and the pain was just as though something—say a swordfish—was cutting me in two!" Steve shook his head soberly. "It—it was fierce, Tom!"

"Serves you right! You had no business swimming way out there in water like that and scaring us all to pieces!" Tom was very severe as to language, but the effect was somewhat marred by the fact that he had filled his mouth with food. Nevertheless, Steve took the rebuke quite meekly. All he said was:

"And think of you rescuing me, Tom! Why, you aren't any sort of a swimmer! But it certainly was mighty pluck——"

Tom pointed a fork at Steve and interrupted indignantly. It was necessary to head Steve off from further expressions of gratitude. "I like

your cheek!" said Tom. "Can't swim! How do you suppose I got out there to you, you silly chump? You didn't see any water-wings or life-preservers floating around, did you? Or do you think I walked? Can't swim! Well, of all the——"

"You know what I mean, Tom. I meant you couldn't swim—er—well, that you weren't a wonder at it!"

"Huh!" grunted Tom. "Don't you talk about swimming after this. You weren't doing much of it when I got to you!"

"No one can swim when he has cramps," responded Steve meekly. "How was the supper?"

Tom gazed at the empty dishes. "All right—as far as it went. I'm going to get up. What time is it and what's going on downstairs?"

"Nothing much just now. We just got through supper. They're taking the chairs and tables out of the dining-room so we can have signal drill at eight. Mr. Robey said you were to get into it if you felt all right. There's someone else downstairs who wants to see you too." And Steve grinned wickedly. "I told him I'd try to arrange an interview."

"Who is it?" asked Tom suspiciously.

"His name is Murray."

"I don't know any Murray. What is this, a joke?"

"Far from it, Tom. Mr. Murray is a newspaper man. He came over to get the line-up for to-morrow's game from Mr. Robey and got here just as they were talking about that silly stunt of mine. He laid around and waited for me and got it all out before I knew he was a newspaper chap. Now he wants to see you. I *think* he wants your photograph, Tom!"

"You were a silly ass to talk to him, Steve. He will go and put it in the paper, I suppose."

"Wouldn't be surprised," agreed Steve, smiling. "He seemed to think he had a fine yarn. Of course I laid it on pretty thick about your heroism and all that."

Tom viewed him darkly as he got into his coat. "If you did I'll—I'll——"

"Take me back to the Sound and drop me in again? No, I didn't, Tom, but he does know all about it and of course he will put it in the papers. 'Boots' says the—the Something-or-Other Press will get hold of it and send it all over the country. I've been wondering whether we ought to telegraph the folks so they won't have a fit if they read about it to-morrow."

"What's the use? They'll know you're all

right. Bet you that Mr. Newspaper Man doesn't catch me, though! Who's that hitting the ivories?"

"Gleason, I guess. He was playing before supper. He's fine, too. Knows a whole bunch of college songs and stuff from the musical shows. We're going to have a concert after practice. They say Danny Moore can sing like a bird. Andy was telling me that last year they had a regular vaudeville show here. Everybody did something, you know; sang or danced or spoke a piece. It must have been lots of fun. I wish——"

Steve, who had been wandering around the room, hands in pockets, paused as he caught the expression on Tom's face. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"That's what I want to know," replied Tom. "Seems to me you're mighty chatty all of a sudden. Is it the effect of the bath?"

Steve smiled, sighed and shook his head. "Tom," he said, "I've just got to talk or do something this evening. I—I'm as nervous as a —a cat! Ever feel that way?"

Tom viewed him scornfully as he patted his tie into place. "Have I? Why, you silly chump, I'm scared to death this minute! Whenever I

think about—about to-morrow I want to run down to the ocean and swim straight across to Africa!"

"Honest?" Steve brightened perceptibly. "But you don't show it, Tom."

"What's the good of showing it? All I hope is that the barge will make so much noise going back to-morrow that you won't hear my knees knocking together!"

CHAPTER XXVI

AT THE END OF THE FIRST HALF

SATURDAY dawned clear and crisp, with a little westerly breeze stirring the tops of the leafless trees and fluttering the big maroon flag with the grey B that hung from the staff at the back of the grand stand. That was not the only flag displayed, for here and there all along the Row small banners hung from windows, while to add to the patriotic effect all the red and grey cushions in school were piled against the casements to lend their colour. There were few recitations that morning and there might just as well have been none, I fancy. The squad got back from Oakdale at one-thirty, after an early dinner, and were driven directly to the gymnasium, pursued by the school at large with vociferous greetings.

Claflin began to put in an appearance soon after that. Hitherto Brimfield had travelled to Westplains to meet her rival, and this was the first time that the Blue had invaded the Maroon-and-Grey fastness. Hoskins did a rushing business that day, for Claflin had sent nearly her en-

tire population with the team, and many of the visitors were forced to walk from the station. There was an insouciant, self-confident air about the Claflin fellows that impressed Brimfield and irritated her too. "You'd think," remarked Benson, watching from a window in the gym the visitors passing toward the field, "that they had the game already won! A stuck-up lot of dudes, that's what I call them!" But Benson was not in the best of tempers to-day and possibly his judgment was warped!

The Claflin team arrived in one of Hoskins' barges and took possession of the meeting-room upstairs to change into their togs. They were a fine-looking lot of fellows, and they, too, had that same air of confidence that Benson had found annoying. By a quarter past two the stage was set. The grand stand was filled to overflowing, the settees and chairs, which had been brought out to supplement the permanent seats, were all occupied, and many spectators were standing along the ropes. Over the stand the big maroon-and-grey banner floated lazily in the breeze. The field had been newly marked out and the cream-white lines shone dazzlingly in the sharp sunlight. It was a day for light wraps and sweaters, but many visitors, arriving in motor cars that

were now parked behind the gymnasium, were clad in furs. It was distinctly a social occasion, for fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, aunts and uncles had descended upon the school in numbers and half the fellows were parading around before the hour set for the game with admiring relatives or friends, showing their rooms and the dining-hall and the gymnasium, and looking all the time a bit bored at the fuss and secretly enjoying it. Harry Westcott was seen with his father and sister in tow, while Roy Draper was surrounded by an enthusiastic flock of female relatives.

Overhead a clear blue sky, scarcely so much as flecked with a cloud, arched radiantly. The breeze was much too light to place a handicap on either goal, and when, at a quarter after two, the visiting team trotted across from the gymnasium, ducked under the rope at the end of the grand stand and started to warm up it was seen that the long punts she sent away showed scarcely any influence from the wind. Of course Claflin, banked at the east end of the stand, greeted her warriors royally, and, of course, Brimfield gave them a hearty cheer, too. But that acclaim was nothing to the burst of applause that went up when the home team, twenty strong, led by Andy

Miller, romped on. Then Brimfield shouted herself hoarse and made such a clamour that the cheer which the Claflin leaders evoked a moment later sounded like a whisper by comparison.

Ten minutes of brisk signal work, punting, catching and goal-kicking followed, and then, while along the road an occasional screech from a belated automobile sounded, the teams retired to opposite sides of the field, the maroon-and-grey megaphones, which had been keeping time to a song sung by some hundred and thirty youths, died away and the comparative quiet that precedes the beginning of battle fell over the field. The officials met on the side line and then, accompanied by Captain Miller, walked to the centre of the field. From the farther side a blue-sleeved and blue-stockinged youth advanced to meet them. A coin spun, glittering, in the air, fell, rolled and was recovered. Heads bent above it, the group broke up and Andy Miller waved to his players. Then blankets and sweaters were cast aside and ten maroon-sleeved youths gathered about their leader. There was a low-voiced conference and the team scattered over the east end of the field. Brimfield had won the toss, had given the kick-off to Claflin and Captain Burrage

had chosen the west goal and what slight advantage might come from a breeze at his back.

Andy Miller and the two coaches had arranged the line-up the evening before. There had been some indecision as to filling one or two positions for the start of the game, and the line-up as it was presented when the whistle blew held several surprises for the school. Here it is, and the Claflin list as well:

Brimfield.	Claflin.
Roberts, l. e.	r. e., Chester
Lacey, l. t.	r. t., Mears
Fowler, l. g.	r. g., Colwell
Innes, c.	c, Kenney
Hall, r. g.	l. g., Johnson
Williams, r. t.	l. t., Bentley
Miller, r. e.	l. e., Mumford
Milton, q. b.	q. b., Ainsmith
Harris, l. h. b.	r. h. b., Burrage
Kendall, r. h. b.	l. h. b., Whittemore
Norton, f. b.	f. b., Atkinson

"Are you ready, Brimfield? Ready, Claflin?"

The whistle piped, a Claflin linesman stepped forward, swung a long leg and the battle was on. Williams caught the ball on the thirty-yard line. On a fake kick play Miller tried Claflin's right tackle and made but two yards. Norton punted to Claflin's thirty, where Burrage fumbled the

ball and Ainsmith recovered it. Claflin at once punted out of bounds to Brimfield's forty-five-yard mark. Kendall made three yards around the enemy's right end and then, on the next play, failed at the line. Milton tried a forward pass to Miller, but the ball grounded and Norton kicked to Claflin's twenty-yard line.

Two tries by the Blue netted little and she again punted and the ball was Brimfield's on her own forty-seven yards. Harris failed to gain through Claflin's left tackle and Brimfield was penalised fifteen yards for holding. On a criss-cross against left tackle Harris was tackled for a loss and Norton then punted to Whittemore and the latter ran the ball back fifteen yards before he was stopped. On a try through Hall the Blue's full-back failed to gain. But on a second attempt at the other side of centre he smashed through for seven yards. A delayed pass by the Claflin quarter gave his side first down on Brimfield's thirty-five-yard line. Atkinson again tried Hall and gained less than a yard. Ainsmith attempted the Brimfield left end and was thrown by Harris for a five-yard loss. Captain Burrage tried Brimfield's right end and failed. With one down left and fifteen yards to gain Burrage tried a forward pass. It was successfully captured, but the dis-

tance was short and the pigskin went to Brimfield on her thirty-eight yards.

Norton punted on first down and Claflin returned it. Kendall misjudged the ball and it rolled to the Maroon's twelve yards. Milton fell on it there. Kendall and Norton gained two yards each through centre, and Norton punted to Brimfield's forty-five yard line, where Burrage made a fair catch.

The stands grew very quiet while the Claflin quarter-back poised the ball. Then Burrage stepped forward and sent it speeding away. But the kick was short and Norton caught the ball on his five-yard line and, behind excellent interference, ran it back to the thirty-yard line before he was thrown by Chester. From there Norton punted to the Blue's thirty and Claflin returned the punt on first down to her adversary's forty yards. Harris caught it, but was nailed in his tracks by Mumford, who made a spectacular tackle which won applause from friend and foe alike. Time was called for an injury to Mumford, but he was soon on his feet again.

Claflin was penalised for off-side on the next play. Norton went through right guard for first down and Brimfield shouted joyously. Kendall failed to gain. Norton made a yard and then

dropped back to kick formation. The play, however, proved to be a forward pass to Roberts. Roberts was out of position and the pigskin was intercepted by the Claflin quarter. It was then the Blue's ball on her forty-five yards. Hall let the runner through for a yard and Claflin pulled off a successful forward pass to her left end on Brimfield's thirty-nine-yard line. The Blue's full-back was stopped in an attempt on the opposite right tackle and a penalty for off-side brought the ball to near the middle of the field. Claflin then punted to Brimfield's seven yards and the whistle sounded the end of the first quarter.

The stand cheered while the players traversed the field to line up under the shadow of the west goal.

Brimfield thrust Norton at the Claflin centre when the play began again and the big full-back made three yards. Then he dropped behind his goal-line and punted, the ball going out of bounds at the twenty-four yards. Claflin cheered loudly as the teams lined up.

Claflin's full-back made a yard through the centre, but lost the distance when, on the next down, he went against Lacey. Captain Burrage dropped back to kicking position on the thirty-five-yard line and once more Brimfield's goal was

in danger. The pass was straight and true. Burrage dropped the ball and swung his foot. But two Brimfield forwards had broken through and as the ball left the ground Andy Miller blocked it. There was a mad scramble for the pigskin, Williams at last falling on it on his twenty-five yards. Norton punted poorly, the ball going diagonally across the gridiron, and it was Claflin's first down on Brimfield's twenty-eight yards. Atkinson came through centre for a yard, and then Burrage once more dropped back for a try at goal. The attempt looked rather desperate, for the kicker was standing almost on the forty-yard-line, but Brimfield's supporters held their breaths until the Claflin half-back had swung his long leg. Then a vast shout of relief went up from where the maroon-and-grey megaphones waved tumultuously, for Burrage had made a bad mess of the drop-kick and the ball rolled along the ground and was captured by a Brimfield back.

Still went in for Harris, who had been hurt in the scramble. On the second down, with seven to go, Norton received the ball at full speed from Milton, broke through the Claflin line and, pursued by the wild cheers of the Brimfield spectators, made fifty-five yards through a broken field, at last landing the ball on Claflin's twenty-

yard line. It looked as though Brimfield's moment of victory was at hand. Time was taken out for a Claflin injury and eventually Atkinson was replaced by a substitute. Brimfield made two tries at the enemy's right end and gained four yards. Williams dropped out of the line and retreated to Claflin's twenty-five-yard line. The ball was almost opposite the middle of the crossbar when it went back to him on the pass from centre, but Innes had thrown it low and Williams was hurried by the Blue's forwards, who came crashing through. The ball went three yards wide of the left-hand upright and Brimfield in the stand groaned.

Claflin put the ball in play on her twenty-five yards and Whittemore punted to Milton on Brimfield's forty-five. Milton plunged back some twelve yards before he was brought down. Norton punted on second down to the Blue's ten yards and the ball was run back ten by the Claflin quarter. The game then became a punting duel and after three exchanges Kendall, getting the ball on his own thirty-five-yard line, ran it back to the opponent's forty, dodging beautifully through a broken field and throwing off at least a half-dozen tacklers. Brimfield tried Claflin's left tackle twice and totalled five yards. A penalty,

however, set her back ten yards, and Norton punted again to Claflin's twenty yards. Gleason was sent in by Coach Robey in place of Lacey. Claflin failed to gain and Whittemore punted to Still on the Maroon's forty-four yards. Norton tried the enemy's centre and failed of a gain and then punted out of bounds at Claflin's fifteen. Claflin sent in a substitute right end and Coach Robey put Corcoran in for Kendall. Claflin punted to midfield and Corcoran made one yard through the enemy's centre. An off-side play by the Blue gave Brimfield five yards and took the ball to the Blue's forty. Still gained two at left tackle and the half ended with the pigskin on Claflin's thirty-eight yards, the score 0 to 0.

The teams trotted off, blanket-draped, toward the gymnasium, the substitutes trailing along behind, and the stand broke into excited discussion of the game. So far the honours had been fairly even, although toward the end of the second period the ball had remained in Claflin territory most of the time. In fact, after Williams' try for goal, the pigskin had never been nearer to Brimfield's last white mark than her thirty-five-yard line. Claflin averaged some four and a half pounds more than the home team, but in spite of that an unbiased critic would have given Brim-

field the honours in the attacking game. Her play seemed smoother, her men better drilled. Neither team had shown great ability at line-plunging, although Norton's fine rush of fifty-five yards and Kendall's run of twenty-five gave Brimfield the benefit of the ground-gained figures. Each side had good reason to claim the ultimate victory, and each did so, meanwhile cheering and singing and working the enthusiasm up to a fine pitch.

CHAPTER XXVII

STEVE SMILES

Steve caught up with Tom on the way to the gymnasium. Tom was a disreputable looking object. His upper lip had been cut and had swollen to almost twice its normal size, and he had lost half an inch of skin from one cheek. When he smiled, which he did as Steve grabbed him by the arm, the effect was absolutely diabolical.

"You're the goods, Tommikins!" exclaimed Steve, squeezing the arm he held. "They didn't make an inch through you. You were great!"

"They got through once or twice," mumbled Tom.

"Oh, for a yard or so," scoffed Steve. "Who gave you that peach of a mouth, Tom?"

"Johnson, I think." He touched it gingerly. "It feels as big as a house."

"You're a blooming hero, Tom. Say, Marvin told me the New York papers have got all about that business at Oakdale yesterday. He didn't see it, but someone told him. Wouldn't you love

to read what they say? I'm going to get the papers as soon as the game's over."

"Silly rot," mumbled Tom. They were waiting for the throng ahead to get through the doorway. When they followed Tom paused a moment in the hallway, his gaze following the striped legs of the Claflin players as they went up the stairs. Steve tugged at his arm.

"Come on, slow-poke! What's the matter?"

"Nothing. That is, I was just thinking how rotten those fellows will feel if they get beaten."

"Maybe they won't," said Steve soberly. "If they don't, think how rotten we'll feel!"

Tom smiled, wincing with the twinge from his swollen lip. "I suppose someone's got to feel bad. Come on."

In the locker room and in the rubbing room beyond all was bustle. The rubber was hard at work over the table and Danny Moore was already busy with surgeon's plaster and medicated gauze and nasty-smelling lotion. There was very little talk as yet. Fellows sank on to benches and wearily relaxed their tired muscles. Mr. Robey and "Boots" were consulting in low tones by one of the grated windows. Tom eased himself to a seat and began to strip down one torn woollen

stocking, displaying an abrasion along the shin bone that brought an exclamation from Steve.

"Shut up," said Tom. "Swipe a bunch of that absorbent cotton from Danny for me, will you? If he sees this he will make a fuss about it. I don't want it to get stiff on me. Hi, Fowler, how is it?"

"All right," replied the left-guard, working a bunch of bleeding knuckles experimentally. "It was hot work, though. Can we hold them next half, Hall?"

"Sure! They're as tired as we are, I guess. Besides, we had them on the run there toward the last."

Tom dragged himself off to the wash-room to bathe his leg with the cotton Steve had brought.

"Ten minutes more," announced Lawrence.

"Hurry in to the table, you fellows," called Danny. "Williams, come here and let me see that knee of yours."

"It's all right now, Danny," said Williams. But he limped across and was freshly bandaged. Mr. Robey left the window and sought Captain Miller, while "Boots," consulting the scribbled notes in his little book, went from player to player, criticising and advising.

"Five minutes!" called Lawrence.

"Hurry up, fellows," said Coach Robey. "Don't let's keep them waiting. Everyone all right? Just a word then. You fellows played well, and I want to tell you so. You made mistakes; everyone does. Never mind that now. You've got another chance. That's the main thing. We're going to win this game. We're going to score two touchdowns and we're going to hold them off, fellows. You can do it if you make up your minds to. I want every one of you to go back on the field looking as though you'd just come out of a Turkish bath and hadn't done a lick of work. I want every mother's son of you to smile from the time you leave this building until the last whistle blows. If I see one of you who isn't smiling I'll pull him out! We want to make those fellows understand right away that we're going to win, that we *know* we're going to win and that we can't help being happy about it! But you've got to do more than smile. You've got to work like the dickens! You've got to work just about twice as hard as you've been working. Any one of you who thinks he can't do that say so now." Mr. Robey's eyes searched the earnest, attentive faces around him. "All right. Now, there's just one important criticism I've got to make. You fellows were slow. Milton was slow

in getting his signals off and the rest of you were slow in starting. If you'll speed up you'll get the jump on those fellows every time. I want to see you do it. I want to see you *jump!* I'll pull out the first man of you who doesn't start the instant the play begins. Understand that, please. I'll forgive mistakes, but I won't stand for slowness. All right. Here's the line-up: Edwards, Gleason, Fowler, Thursby, Hall, Williams, Miller, Milton, Still, Kendall, Norton. How much time is there, Joe?"

"About three minutes," answered Lawrence.

"All right. On the trot now!"

The cheer leaders leaped to their places as the teams came hustling back to the field and waved their megaphones and dropped them and beat time with clenched hands as the cheers burst forth.

"*Rah, rah, Brimfield! Rah, rah, Brimfield! Rah, rah, Brimfi-e-ld!*"

"*Claflin! Claflin! Claflin! Rah, rah, rah, Claflin! Claflin! Claflin!*"

And then Fowler had thudded the ball away with a long swing of his foot and the last half had begun.

The Claflin full-back pulled the ball out of the air, quick interference formed about him and he came charging back up the field. Five—ten—

fifteen yards! Then Miller pulled him down with a savage tackle and the two teams faced each other. Umpire and referee dodged out of the way, Ainsmith called his signals and a back tore at Williams. The secondary defence sprang to the point of attack. There was an instant of confused heaving and swaying. Then the whistle sounded and the lines straightened again.

"Second down! Seven to gain!"

Steve, profiting by Miller's advice, kept his gaze fixed on the face of the opposing end who was edging out into the field. Then the ball was in play and the Claflin end came tearing down upon him, dodged to the right and then strove to slip past him inside. But Steve met him squarely with his shoulder and sent him sprawling. Behind him the teams were off under a punt and he recovered himself and raced along. It was Milton's ball on his thirty-yard line. Brimfield punted on first down and Claflin tore off three yards through centre and then kicked. Neither team was able to gain consistently through the line and each punted on second or third down. Brimfield had a trifle the better of the exchanges, aided a little by the breeze which had freshened since the beginning of the game. With the ball on Claflin's forty-two yards a fumble was recovered by Ain-

smith for a loss of seven yards, and on third down Claflin attempted a forward pass which was intercepted by Captain Miller and carried to Claflin's thirty-yard mark. Brimfield cheered encouragingly and Norton smashed through left tackle for four. Kendall added two more and on a wing shift Still made the distance and the ball was down on the Blue's twenty yards. Two yards through centre by Norton was followed by a wide end run and the loss of four yards, Still being captured by Captain Burrage. Norton failed to gain at the line and Williams dropped back to kick.

Milton followed to hold the ball for him and Brimfield held her breath. Thursby passed low to the quarter and when the ball arose it bounded away from a charging Claflin forward and went dancing and rolling back up the field. It was finally secured by Gleason on Claflin's thirty-three yards. Three tries by the Maroon netted but six and again Williams went back. This time the kick was short and Claflin secured the ball on her five-yard line and ran it in to the thirteen. Claflin made four around Steve's end and three through Williams. Then Whittemore punted to midfield.

Brimfield returned to her line-smashing and

secured first down on the Blue's thirty-six yards. There a forward pass to Captain Miller grounded and Milton made a short punt to the Blue's ten yards. Steve upset Burrage in his tracks. Claflin tried the Brimfield centre twice for four yards and punted to the fifty-yard line. Milton came back twelve and Kendall added six around the enemy's left end. Norton secured first down through right guard. Time was called and Danny Moore scurried on with his pail. Milton was injured and led off, Marvin taking his place. A forward pass to Captain Miller netted twelve yards. Marvin carried the ball through centre for two and Kendall met a stone wall when he tried to get past Johnson. Norton made a yard through left tackle and Williams dropped back to the twenty-yard line. The Brimfield supporters were cheering wildly, imploring a touchdown, but it seemed that a field goal was the best they were to have.

"Get through and block it!" implored the Claflin quarter.

"Hold that line!" shrieked Marvin.

Back came the ball, Williams swung his leg, ran back and to the right and passed to Steve. But the ball went wide and settled into the arms of the Claflin right end. Dodging and feinting

that speedy youngster tore off thirty-five yards before he was brought down and the ball was Claflin's on Brimfield's forty yards. The Blue found her stride again then and plunged through Fowler twice for good gains, finally securing her distance on the Maroon's twenty-eight. Fowler, who was staggering, was taken out and McClure came on. Claflin tried Steve's end and made four yards and then, on a fake kick formation, got three more through centre. Burrage tried a drop-kick for goal from the thirty-yard line, but McClure broke through and blocked it, the ball going to the Blue on Brimfield's thirty-eight yards. Two tries at the line gave Claflin three yards and Ainsmith shot the ball away to Mumford at the far side of the field. Miller stopped the runner after a twelve-yard gain. Claflin worked the ball back toward the centre of the field in two downs and then, faking a kick, gained two yards through Hall. It was third down, with three to go, and again Burrage tried a placement. The ball went wide and came back to the twenty-five-yard line. Norton punted on second down and time was called after Claflin had caught and run back five.

Churchill replaced Tom at right guard when the last quarter started and Lacey returned to the game at left tackle. Claflin put Atkinson

back at full and trotted in a substitute right tackle. On the first play Ainsmith smashed through the Brimfield line for ten yards, and then added two more. The weak place was Williams. Atkinson got four and then two through the centre. With the pigskin on Brimfield's forty yards an intricate wing shift failed to fool the Maroon and Whittemore was stopped after a gain of a yard, the ball going to Brimfield.

Marvin gained two through left tackle and Norton punted. Claflin ran back to her thirty-four yards. On the next play Claflin was set back fifteen yards for holding and, after an attempted forward pass which grounded, punted to the Maroon's forty-five. Marvin caught and dodged back fifteen yards before he was stopped. On the first play he shot the ball to Steve, and Steve, making a good catch, reeled off ten before he was brought down. Another forward pass to Captain Miller gained five. Norton plunged at the line for three and Kendall failed to gain. With the ball on Claflin's twenty-two yards Williams went back. It was a fake, however, Marvin taking the ball for a straight plunge through centre, which gave Brimfield first down on Claflin's eighteen. Norton plugged the centre for two and Kendall swept around the Blue's left end for three more.

With the pigskin on Claflin's thirteen-yard line a score seemed certain. But Norton was stopped for no gain and once more Williams dropped back to kick.

Williams, however, was badly tuckered and was so slow in getting the ball away that again Claflin blocked and the ball was captured by Mumford on the twenty-five-yard line. Claflin punted on first down and the ball went out of bounds at the Blue's forty. Norton kicked to Claflin's fifteen and Ainsmith ran back to his thirty-six, receiving a salvo of applause from the blue section of the stand. Claflin made four around Miller's end and on the next play was presented with five, Brimfield being detected off-side. Atkinson made six through Williams and followed it with two more past Lacey. On a fake kick Ainsmith got through Thursby for three, taking the ball across the centre line for first down. A forward pass to right end was upset by Steve and Claflin punted on second down. Kendall caught on his twenty-five and was stopped at the thirty. Brimfield made seven in two plunges at the left side of the opposing line and then Still fumbled. Marvin recovered and Norton kicked to Claflin's thirty. Steve and Miller upset Ainsmith where he caught. Claflin was now playing on the defensive and

kicked on first down. The punt was short and Kendall got it on Claflin's forty-eight yards and made ten before he was caught.

The timer announced four minutes to play. Claflin sent in a new quarter-back and Coach Robey replaced Williams with Gleason. Williams was groggy and had to be carried off the field. From the grand stand came imploring cries from Brimfield for a touchdown and equally imploring shouts of "Hold 'em! Hold em!" from Claflin.

Still took the pigskin on a criss-cross and made four around Claflin's right end. Norton shot through centre for the rest of the distance, placing the ball on the Blue's twenty-eight. With Williams out of the game it was a touchdown or nothing. Kendall and Still plugged the left of the Blue's line for two yards each and Norton got around the other end for three. With three to go on third down Marvin worked a delayed pass and made first down on the Blue's seventeen yards. The time-keeper announced three minutes left. Thursby gave place to Coolidge. Norton plunged through right tackle for five, but someone had held and Brimfield was set back fifteen. Kendall tried the Claflin left end and gained four on a long run across the field. Marvin took the ball for a plunge through centre, but was thrown

back for a loss. Norton was forced to punt and put the ball out of bounds at the five-yard line.

The time-keeper announced one minute left and Claflin punted from behind her goal-line, the ball going high and being caught by Marvin on the Blue's thirty yards. Brimfield, desperate for a score, lined up quickly and Norton struck the Claflin centre and piled through for ten yards. The Blue was weakening. Kendall added four and Still made a yard at left tackle. On the fifteen-yard line Marvin sent McClure back as if to try for a goal. Evidently Claflin accepted the bluff in good faith, for, although there were cries of "Fake!" the Claflin ends played well in. Marvin called his signals once, hesitated and pulled Kendall closer in to protect the kicker. Then, "Signals!" he shouted. "16—34—27—19!" He glanced sharply around the back-field. "16—34—27——"

Back went the ball, but not to McClure. The quarter had it and was stepping back out of the path of the plunging players. Then his arm shot out and off went the ball, arching to the left, over the end of the battling, swaying lines, straight and far and true to where a lithe figure stood with upraised hand near the Blue's ten-yard line. Too late Claflin saw her error.

Steve ran a step forward, felt the pigskin settle into his outstretched hands, whirled on his heel and sped toward the goal-line. The Claflin right end was almost on him as he crossed the five-yard mark, but when desperate arms settled about Steve's legs and brought him crashing to earth he was well over that last white line and the day was won! Frantic blue-stockinged youths dropped mercilessly down upon him and drove the breath from his body, in his ears was a wild and terrific clamour of frenzied joy and faintly a whistle shrilled. Steve, his nose buried in the soft sod, clutched the ball tightly beneath him and smiled in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CHUMS READ A TELEGRAM

The tumult was over, although from the Row came at times a wild shout of exultation from some enthusiastic youth. In 12 Billings, Steve and Tom were dressing for the banquet. There was no feverish hurry in their movements. Tom sat for minutes at a time with a shirt draped across his knees and smiled fatuously through swollen lips. There was plenty of time. The banquet was not to be until seven, and it was now still but a little past six. When they spoke they spoke slowly, lazily, as though nothing much mattered, as though Fate had given them everything they wanted and nothing was left to be desired. Steve, dreamily slipping a belt through the loops of his best trousers, said:

"Tom, when I look at you I'm ashamed of myself. There you are with a face like a war map and one leg all bunged up, and here am I without a scratch. I've got a bum wrist, but it doesn't show." And Steve scowled at the offending member.

Tom grinned. "You can have my mouth if you want it," he said. After a minute he spoke again. "I was glad about Benson," he said.

Steve nodded. "So was I."

Tom laughed. "Yes, you looked it!"

"Well, I didn't know why Robey was taking me out, of course. It seemed after I'd made that touchdown that he'd ought to let me play the game out. Benson was rather—rather pathetic when he hobbled on. I'm glad he's got his letter, though."

"Yes, and there's only one thing I'm not glad about," responded Tom thoughtfully, beginning to squirm into his shirt. "I'm not glad we missed that goal. I wanted that extra point."

"How could we help missing it? Andy isn't any goal kicker, and all the others were afraid to try, I suppose. What's the odds, though? We won, and six to nothing is good enough, isn't it?"

"Mm—yes; seven to nothing would have looked better, though."

"And you're the fellow," scoffed Steve, "who was almost crying awhile back because Claflin would feel bad if we licked her!"

Tom only grunted. Steve went into a day-

dream with one leg in his trousers until, presently, Tom laughed softly.

"What are you choking about?" asked Steve.

"Just thinking. Remember, Steve, coming on in the train how we were talking about what—what it would be like here?"

"N—no," answered Steve. "Were we?"

"Yes. I remember you said that in the stories the hero was always suspected of something he hadn't done and you said you'd bet that if anyone tried that on you you'd make a kick."

"Well, what of it?"

"You didn't, though. Some of the fellows thought you'd swiped that blue-book that time and you didn't make a murmur."

"Because——"

"Because you thought I'd done it and was trying to shield me. I know. Then you said that in the stories the hero saves someone from drowning and the football captain puts him into the big game and he wins it by a wonderful run the length of the field."

"That's right, isn't it? All the school stories have it like that, don't they?"

"I know."

"Well, then——"

"The funny thing is that it happened like that to us, Steve, or pretty nearly. I don't mean that I—I actually saved you from drowning, but——"

"You sure did, though!"

"Anyway, it was something like that, wasn't it? And then you went and won the game in the last minute of play, just as they do in the stories."

"I didn't make any run the length of the field," denied Steve. "All I did was catch the ball and go ten yards with it. Nothing wonderful about that."

"Still, it's all pretty much like the story-writers tell it, after all, eh? That's what struck me as funny."

"Huh! It doesn't seem to me much like it is in the stories. Say, we forgot about the papers, Tom!"

"What papers?"

"The New York papers, with the account of the thrilling rescue at Oakdale, with your picture——"

"He didn't get any picture of me," said Tom grimly.

"He made you talk, though," laughed Steve.

"He'd make anyone talk," Tom grunted.

"By Jove!" He jumped suddenly to his feet, and with more animation than had been displayed in Number 12 for a half-hour hurried to the closet.

"What's up?" asked Steve in surprise.

"Telegram," came in smothered tones from Tom. "Here it is. Lawrence handed it to me in the gym after the game. Said it came at noon, but Robey wouldn't let him give it to me. Bet you it's from my dad."

Tom tore the end from the yellow envelope and there was silence in the room for a moment. At last, with a queer expression on his battered countenance, he walked across and held the message out to Steve. "It's for you, too," he said quietly.

Steve took it and read: "Tannersville, Pa., Nov. 25. Morning papers have account of Oakdale scrape grateful to you for your rescue of Steve God bless you show this to Steve your father joins me in love to you both. John T. Edwards."

Steve let the telegram fall and stared blankly at Tom.

"What—do—you know—about that?" he gasped. "They've made it up, Tom!"

Tom nodded gravely. "It—it——" A slow

smile overspread his face. "Honest, Steve, that's better than winning the game!"

"You bet it is! And you did it!"

"Oh, no." Tom's eyes twinkled merrily. "You did it yourself, Steve, by trying to get drowned!"

THE END

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